THEORETICAL AND DISCUSSION JOURNAL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

JUNE 1959

Marxism Today

ANDREW ROTHSTEIN — STATE AND REVOLUTION

KATHERINE HOOD — FIFTY YEARS OF ORGANISED SELF-HELP

JACK MOODY — "HUMAN RELATIONS"

BRIAN HAYES — THE FUTURE EMPLOYMENT OF BRITISH SCIENTISTS

W. LAUCHLAN — THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE "DAILY WORKER"

DISCUSSION:

W. GALLACHER
MICHAEL COHEN — ON THE JEWISH PROBLEM

Monthly 1/6

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Marxism Today

Vol. 3 No. 6

CONTENTS

		Page
Andrew ROTHSTEIN	**State and Revolution** ... ... A study of Lenin's work and its application in Britain.	161
Katherine HOOD	**Fifty Years of Organised Self-Help** ... ... An examination of benefits and contributions over fifty years.	167
Jack MOODY	**"Human Relations"** ... ... Experience of how they work.	174
Brian HAYES	**On the Future Employment of British Scientists** ... ... An analysis of the present position and what is needed.	177
W. LAUCHLAN	**The Communist Party and the "Daily Worker"** ... ... The campaign following the 26th Congress of the Communist Party of Great Britain.	181
DISCUSSION:		
W. GALLACHER Michael COHEN	**On the Jewish Problem**... ...	186

Editor John Gollan

Assistant Editor
James Klugmann

Editorial Board
Professor J. D. Bernal
Emile Burns
Les Burt
Maurice Cornforth
Maurice Dobb
Arnold Kettle
John Lewis
John Mahon
Frank Stanley
Professor George Thomson
John Wood

Editorial correspondence
James Klugmann,
16 King Street, W.C.2.

Advertisements
Margaret Williamson,
above address.

Orders and Subscriptions
usual agents or
Central Books Ltd.,
37 Grays Inn Road,
London, W.C.1.

Subscription rates
Six issues 10s. 6d.
Twelve issues 21s.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

State and Revolution

Andrew Rothstein

I

LENIN'S book on the state, which had a decisive effect on the international working class movement after the First World War, appeared in its final form in Soviet Russia in 1919. In the same year, the first English edition appeared in this country, translated by British Socialists from the Russian original text, which had been smuggled in from Scandinavia. That alone would justify a review of its principal teachings and their subsequent history, forty years later.

But there is an additional reason of particular interest to British readers. If they look at that first English edition, they will see that it was published jointly by the British Socialist Party and the Socialist Labour Party. From June 1919 onwards those two organisations were engaged with other smaller groups in negotiations for the formation of a Communist Party in this country. Their joint publication of Lenin's epoch-making work was conceived of as helping that cause by spreading Lenin's ideas on the basic question—the Marxist attitude to the state—and providing a symbol of the coming unity. Owing to "technical" problems created by the police, and to further delays caused by the great railway strike in the autumn, copies were not put on sale until the beginning of November, 1919—by which time the S.L.P. as a party had withdrawn from the negotiations, and only its most advanced minority was carrying on the preparations for unity. Yet a glance at the socialist literature of 1919-20 will reveal what a profound impression the book made on the most active minds in the working class movement. And they were prepared for it.

As Lenin wrote in his first preface to the book (August 1917), the question of the state became of particular importance, both in theory and in practical politics, as a result of the imperialist war which began in 1914. Its unprecedented horrors and miseries made the position of the masses unbearable and increased their anger beyond all precedent. "An international proletarian revolution is clearly maturing", Lenin wrote. This was not a matter of chance, for consistent Marxists. Their attitude to the war, and to what should come out of it, had been predetermined at a series of international Socialist Congresses, reaffirmed as recently as 1912 at the Congress of Basle:

> "Should war nevertheless break out, it is the duty of Socialists . . . to make use of the economic and political crisis in the fullest possible measure to rouse the common people and thus accelerate the downfall of the domination of capital."

That is precisely what the Bolsheviks had been doing since 1914, and November 1917 saw their work carried to its triumphant conclusion. The domination of capital was overthrown, and at once the problem arose of constructing a new working class state in place of the old one. Lenin's book was not only, for the Socialists of other countries, a breath-taking re-education in the real principles of Marxism, but also an exceptional stimulus to their struggle against the imperialist invasion of Socialist Russia—a struggle begun directly the Armistice was signed in November 1918. Lenin's *State and Revolution* brought home, as nothing else could have done, that standing by Soviet Russia was not an ordinary act of working class solidarity, but the defence of everything that international revolutionary Socialists in all countries had worked for since Marx and Engels wrote the *Communist Manifesto*.

Here was the proletariat of a great country which had "raised itself to the position of ruling class", here it was "wresting by degrees all capital from the bourgeoisie": here it was forming a state which was recognisable as "the proletariat organised as the ruling class"; here it was preparing to "entirely revolutionise the mode of production", i.e. to build up a socialist system.

In 1959 the Party founded by Lenin has proclaimed at its Twenty-First Congress that that system is not only triumphant, but "has reached a level of productive forces, socialist production relations and cultural development that allows the building of a Communist society to be started on a broad front". Lenin in his book foresaw this as an inevitable transition, as socialist society grew stronger and the traces of capitalism within it began to fade.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

If the study of *State and Revolution* helped socialist workers in 1919, it will do so all the more in 1959.

II

Lenin began by brushing aside the non-socialist, half-Liberal, half-religious and entirely philistine ideas prevalent in the Socialist movement then (and still widespread in the Labour movement today) about what the state is—that the state is something which stands above classes and acts as the balancing or conciliating force between them: that at best it is something which can serve everybody, and that all the workers have to do is to "capture" it: that it is "embodied in society" (J. Ramsay MacDonald's words in his *Parliament and Revolution*), and so forth.

Lenin brought back into circulation in the working class movement the following basic ideas of Marx and Engels, showing moreover how these ideas had developed under the pressure of revolutionary events in the lifetime of the great founders of scientific socialism. The state is an instrument "for the oppression of one class by another". It arose when society first broke up into classes—when the "public power" was "no longer directly identical with the population organising itself as an armed power". The very existence of the state proves that antagonisms between existing classes are irreconcilable, and that all the ruling class can do is to create a special machine for moderating the full effect of those antagonisms, by holding down the other classes. What does this machine consist of? First and foremost of armies, "special bodies of armed men", with prisons and other means of coercion as "appendages": "a standing army and police are the chief instruments of state power". Moreover, when the classes ruling society changed, in the course of history, their "special bodies of armed men" and other appendages, making up the state machine, also changed; because the new ruling class could only reach power by overthrowing the old one—and that meant first defeating the old "special bodies of armed men" with the help of other military forces and breaking up the old state machine as a whole by putting in its place different officials, organised differently. The bourgeois state would therefore be ended by the proletariat, and replaced by a proletarian state.

Have these ideas stood the test of time? Is it true, as Karl Marx wrote in his *Civil War in France,* that historically the state in Europe is "a public force organised for social enslavement, an engine of class despotism"?

One need not go outside recorded English history, with its wealth of documentary evidence, for the answer: bourgeois historians, non-Marxist though they are, supply much of the material themselves. The tribal society of the Anglo-Saxons, in which all or most able-bodied men were armed, developed into what Engels called "military democracy"—the germ of the state—as they conquered the Britons and seized the land, adding class differences to those which probably already existed among them, making their war leaders into "permanent officials"—kings and thanes (landowners) enjoying legal and economic rights over the peasants and carrying on incessant wars with one another. By the time of the Norman Conquest, feudalism was well advanced, and the conquerors consolidated it. In this system, *beneath* all the struggles and changing political relationships among the greater and smaller landowners, the majority of the people tilled their own or the lord's land as unfree men of different categories. The products of their labour were largely appropriated by their lords, in different forms but always under the ultimate penalty of the use of force (backed if necessary by the state—as in the Peasants' Revolt of 1381). Within the structure of this system, as handicraft separated from agriculture under the influence of a growing market at home and abroad, and bigger and bigger concentrations of craftsmen serving that market formed in the towns, the beginnings of a capitalist class appeared. By the end of the fifteenth century it was one of the pillars on which the feudal kings relied in building themselves up into absolute monarchs (Edward IV and the Tudors). After a series of political struggles, the forces of capitalism (both in town and in country) burst asunder the decayed feudal framework in the great Civil War of the seventeenth century, and established the supremacy of the present capitalist mode of production. In this the worker sells his labour-power (to greater or lesser advantage according to the organised strength he can oppose to the capitalists), and in the long run the power of the state is at the disposal of his "employer" to defend the latter's property in the means of production. Moreover, British capitalism proceeded by violence, in the next two centuries, to force less advanced peoples of Asia, America and Africa into its orbit.

In all these stages, the "special bodies of armed men" changed as the ruling class, with its special requirements, changed. The armed militia of the Anglo-Saxon kings and nobles was already supplemented, however, by their better equipped household warriors. The armed retinues of great lords and knights with their squires and other

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

retainers, who constituted the principal forces of the feudal kings and their rivals, were later on supplemented, for really big wars, by hired hands of professional mercenary soldiers who had broken away from their lords. After the class army of Cromwell's bourgeois revolutionaries, came the small forces, compulsorily enlisted by the triumphant bourgeois dictatorship in the eighteenth century through its press gangs—but supplemented by direct hiring of large (often much larger in the days of Marlborough, Wolfe, Cornwallis and Nelson) armies of conscripted peasants supplied by the poorer military-feudal despots of Europe when really big foreign wars were involved for the commercial supremacy of the world. Then followed the professional hired ("voluntary") armies of the period in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when British capitalism was gathering in the golden fruits of its earlier battles, and there was always a permanent, miserable, despairing reserve of the unemployed in the basement of its system, from whom to recruit for colonial wars: and the huge conscript armies which British imperialism had hastily to create when it began to fight for its life against new powerful rivals in the twentieth century. These successive "special bodies of armed men" constituting the hard core and ultimate support of the state of their time, reflect in their composition and organisation (and, if more closely investigated, in their leadership and armament too) the requirements and economic possibilities of the class then ruling Britain by means of their state.

If we were to follow up all the other "appendages" of the successive forms of the state in Britain—the police (from the primitive collective responsibility of the Anglo-Saxon "tithings", groups of heads of households who had to chase horse-thieves and murderers), the government officials (from the small "chanceries" of priests under the later Anglo-Saxon kings), Parliament itself (from the thirteenth century assembly in which the exploiting classes of feudal society — great and small landowners, town merchants, and master craftsmen—struggled over division of the booty)—we should see the same broad process at work, of course in special forms for each particular branch. Moreover, within the two great periods, feudal and capitalist society respectively (say 1000-1650 and 1650 onwards), the *forms* of "class despotism" might vary greatly, and even objectively signify progress: but viewed from the "under-side", so to speak—from the point of view of the exploited underdog, the vast mass of serfs and wage earners successively—their *essence* remained the same, as shown in innumerable literary complaints recorded over the centuries.

III

What of the capitalist state in its most advanced forms? Engels had written that in a democratic republic there is "an alliance between the Government and the Stock Exchange". Lenin pointed out that through its taxation system, its hordes of officials, its standing army, the state machine of capitalist society attracts the petty bourgeoisie to the side of the big bourgeoisie, by providing "the upper strata of the peasantry, small artisans and tradesmen with a number of comparatively comfortable, quiet and respectable jobs which raise their holders *above* the people". Higher up, "honourable" though non-lucrative posts in the public service are "used as springboards to highly lucrative posts in banks or joint-stock companies". The age of imperialism, wrote Lenin, had brought an unprecedented strengthening of the state machine and growth of its bureaucratic and military apparatus, "in connection with repressive measures against the proletariat in the monarchical as well as in the freest republican countries". Parliament is used for the practice of *parliamentarism*—"to decide once every few years which member of the ruling class is to misrepresent the people in parliament"—while the real business of state is done in the government offices.

Of democracy in capitalist society, Lenin reminded the Socialist movement that it, too, being a form of state, is *an instrument of class rule*. "Wage-slavery is the lot of the people even in the most democratic bourgeois republic"; consequently, fully consistent democracy is impossible under capitalism: in capitalist society democracy "always remains in reality a democracy for the minority, only for the possessing classes, only for the rich"—because "in the ordinary peaceful course of events", the majority are debarred *in practice* by poverty, misery, ignorance, the very conditions of wage slavery (as well as by dozens of petty restrictions) from taking part effectively in public affairs. And if a democratic republic is the "nearest approach" to the dictatorship of the proletariat, that is because it facilitates "the extension, development, unfolding and intensification" of the class struggle—out of which the rule of the working class will be established.

Every word of Lenin on this subject could be substantiated by any active worker in the Labour movement, out of his or her own experience. They know only too well that even a Labour Party majority is allowed to function *only* providing it protects the interests of the ruling class.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But the British Labour movement in addition has the advantage of two admirable studies of the British state today, made at close quarters —the shorter one by John Gollan, *The British Political System* (1954) and a full-length examination by James Harvey and Katherine Hood, *The British State* (1958). Step by step, using the statistics and admissions of the capitalist class itself, the writers analyse, quite factually, the functioning of the party system, the working of the House of Commons, the Monarchy, the House of Lords, the key personnel of the state, the armed forces, police, legal system, Civil Service, Foreign Office, state economic activities, social services, local government and even the B.B.C., TV and churches. Never in British political history has such a remorseless and systematic probing taken place. Not one attempt in the capitalist press has been made to refute it, and only one or two writers dared even to notice it, confining themselves to abuse or empty jeers. And what conclusions do the writers come to?

> "The study of all the different organs of the state which we have made in this book shows that . . . the machinery of the state has been shaped and developed by the capitalist class as an instrument to safeguard and promote the capitalist mode of production. The capitalist class has been compelled to make big concessions to the demands of the working people in the shape of social reforms and other measures. But it has never for one moment lost sight of the need to strengthen the state as the instrument of its rule. . . . Our study of all the organs of the state has shown that a government determined to create a planned socialist economy could never hope to achieve its aim by using the state apparatus in the form inherited from capitalist governments."

The fact is that the vast extension of state monopoly capitalism since Lenin wrote his book—the greatly increased "growing together" of Government and Stock Exchange, of the Big Five banks, the 500 big trusts and the Tory Party, the nationalisation of the mines, railways and air transport as "ancillary" to the great industrial monopolies—has increased and facilitated the capitalist robbery of the British working class and the colonial peoples. If there has been an element of "planning", in these latter years, it has amounted in practice to enabling the capitalists "to take their profit in more 'planned' fashion" —as Lenin said in a speech on May 12th, 1917. And the nature of this system will change even less if the next Labour Government carries out the threat to invest the workers' insurance contributions in the shares of the biggest trusts.

IV

If Lenin's analysis of the capitalist state is proved by experience since his day to be even more true, if that were possible, than it was in 1919, his conclusion cannot be avoided. It was not sufficient, he said (with Marx and Engels) to "simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery". The destruction of the bourgeois state machine, he wrote, "is the chief and fundamental thesis in the Marxian doctrine". It was not only to the interest of the working class that this should happen: the exploitation and oppression by the state of the majority of the people, and the poor peasantry first and foremost, brought the proletariat and other exploited groups together in this. The point is not whether "ministries" should remain, wrote Lenin: "The point is whether the old state machine (connected by thousands of threads with the bourgeoisie and completely saturated with routine and inertia) shall remain, or be *destroyed* and superseded by a new one."

It is important to bear in mind that the most penetrating thinkers of the British bourgeoisie have always hinted that "the old state machine" might be destroyed *from their side* if the working class really laid hold of it for its own purposes, i.e. if a genuinely socialist government came into power, even by parliamentary means. The essence of the English constitution, wrote Walter Bagehot in 1866, was that "the mass of the people yield obedience to a select few"; if there were "a political combination of the lower classes, as such and for their own objects", it would be "an evil of the first magnitude", he added in 1872 (after the Paris Commune), and the "higher orders" would then have to consider whether they would concede the workers' demands, or "risk the effect of the working men's combination" which might be "fatal to far more than its beginners intend".

Bagehot advocated educating the leaders of the working men so as to avoid such a situation: and the Liberal Party, working through the "Fabians" among critically-minded intellectuals and "Lib-Labs" among trade unionists, from the late 'eighties onwards did its best to permeate the Labour movement with the spirit of acceptance of capitalism. Yet the class struggle after the First World War led in Britain, against the will of the Labour leaders, to the great General Strike of 1926. And the following year we find the Tory leader Lord Balfour writing, in a preface to a new edition of Bagehot's *English Constitution*, that, "if a majority of the House of Commons want a revolution" and "a change of Administration would in fact be a revolution disguised under a constitutional procedure", he didn't know whether the present "Cabinet system" could

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

survive "the shocks of revolutionary and counter-revolutionary violence".

Similar threats—use of the royal veto to block real socialist legislation (Lord Rankeillour in 1932), restoration of the Lords veto (*Economist*, May 17th, 1952), use of the monarch to dissolve Parliament at a time of political crisis—have been made more than once since then, in full knowledge that such measures would provoke the people to extra-parliamentary action, and provide the capitalist class with the pretext for dictatorship, governing with the help of the police, the armed forces and officials appointed under the Emergency Powers Act.

In fact, *isolated* instances of the use of the democratic machinery, in the interests of the working class, to over-ride the rights of private property have always involved "direct action" by the capitalist state—for instance, against the Police Union in 1919, the Poplar Borough Council in 1921, the West Ham and Chester-le-Street Guardians in 1926, the Coventry Borough Council in 1957 and the St. Pancras Borough Council in 1958.

It is obvious that no genuine Socialist Government in Britain will leave in existence the state institutions which can be used for purposes hostile to the working majority of the British people. Many would have to be abolished outright—and the Communist Party's programme, *The British Road to Socialism*, mentions two of them: the House of Lords and the Monarchy. With these undoubtedly would go the existing Privy Council, with its unstated reserve powers: the Colonial Office, whose very name stinks in the nostrils of millions of people in Asia, Africa and Latin America: the Standing Joint Committees which take control of the police out of the hands of the local authorities. Other state institutions would obviously have to be completely transformed *from within*, as suggested by the authors quoted earlier, and as the experience of any active Socialist is bound to suggest, by replacing with class conscious workers and pensioning off (if they behave themselves) the vast majority of the personnel of the Foreign Office, the three Service Ministries, the Commonwealth Relations Office, the Home Office and Special Branch, the higher officers of the services and police, the judiciary and prison staff, most of the higher civil servants in all the other Ministries, the Governors and higher personnel of the B.B.C. Others again would have their content radically transformed by the elementary democratic reforms initiated by any genuine Socialist Government, aiming at giving the working class the decisive say in the country's affairs and sweeping away the barriers specially erected to prevent this. Such institutions would be (as *The British Road to Socialism* points out) the managements of the nationalised industries (by putting workers and technicians in place of all former capitalists and pro-capitalists), the municipal authorities (by directly associating local workers' organisations with their daily activities) and the House of Commons itself (by abolishing election deposits, giving the vote at eighteen, proportional representation, transference of powers to Scottish and Welsh Parliaments*; coupled with the freedom of real choice for the elector which would be brought by socialist nationalisation of all large-scale private industry and trade, with life-annuity compensation at average wage-level only for former owners, and by depriving the millionaires of their control of the press).

And all of this, taken together, would mean just what Lenin meant when he spoke of the destruction of the capitalist state machine.

V

"The proletariat needs state power . . . for the purpose of crushing the resistance of the exploiters and . . . *leading* the great mass of the population—the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie, the semi-proletarians—in the work of organising socialist economy," Lenin wrote in Chapter II of *State and Revolution*. This would be the dictatorship of the proletariat—and "a Marxist is one who extends acceptance of the class struggle to acceptance of the dictatorship of the proletariat." But it would not be "dictatorship" in the old sense of the word—the personal power of one man or a small clique—rather the reverse (Chapter III). It would be a state "democratic *in a new way* (for the proletariat and propertyless in general) and dictatorial *in a new way* (against the bourgeois)." It would not abolish representative institutions and the electoral principle—proletarian democracy could not be conceived of without them—but it would banish bourgeois "parliamentarism" from representative institutions, and convert them from talking shops into working bodies. There would be an immense expansion of democracy, "which *for the first time* becomes democracy for the poor, democracy for the people and not democracy for the rich" (Chapter V). Moreover, wrote Lenin, "the transition from capitalism to communism will certainly create a great variety and abundance of political forms, but in essence there will inevitably be only one: the dictatorship of the proletariat."

* Lenin pointed out in *State and Revolution* (ch. IV), that in Britain "the national question had not yet been settled", and consequently that a federal Republic there "would be a step forward".

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And although in Russia he saw the Soviets as its embodiment, he also made clear (Chapter VI) that he foresaw at least one other possible form—"a democratic republic after the type of the Commune."

When Lenin's book was published, there was a howl of derision and rage from the accepted "authorities" in the Socialist movement—Kautsky in Germany, Ramsay MacDonald in Britain, Spargo in America, to mention only three who wrote books denouncing Lenin's ideas and making incautious prophecies about their fate. Yet what has subsequent history shown?

It has shown the Russian Marxists, who accepted the idea of a proletariat ruling the nation through its own state, building a powerful socialist economy and a socialist society, in spite of the most dreadful obstacles at home and violent attacks from abroad; whereas those who *called* themselves Marxists (or repudiated the title) and advised the working class to accept a "democratic" capitalist state as sufficient—in Germany, Czechoslovakia, Austria and Italy after the First World War, in Britain, France and Belgium after the Second—only succeeded in re-establishing the shaken capitalist structure. In the Soviet Union, even before the latest advances in democracy, and notwithstanding the abuses in certain parts of the state machinery during Stalin's last years, which had a retarding effect, history has shown *democracy for the working people* operating on a scale never remotely approached in the previous history of the world—in their direct participation in planning and management of industry (through trade unions and socialist emulation), agriculture (collective farms), state administration (the voluntary "activists" of the local Soviets), public affairs generally (worker and peasant correspondents, ownership of the press, etc.). And the history of the countries where the working people came to power, on the ruins of the old capitalist states, after the Second World War—from the German Democratic Republic to People's China and the Korean Democratic Republic—has confirmed the "great variety" of forms (all non-Soviet) with the single essence, proletarian rule.

But Lenin went further. He reclaimed (in Chapter V) for the Socialist movement the forgotten ideas of Marx and Engels about the *future* of the socialist society which the victory of the working class would make possible, and of the socialist, proletarian state which it would instal. "In striving for socialism", he wrote (Chapter IV), "we are convinced that it will develop into Communism". That will require "a new generation reared in new and free socialist conditions." How will such conditions come about? Although the means of production will no longer be the private property of individuals, a society which has "just come into the world out of the womb of capitalism" will still need to give its members (after deducting what is necessary for public expenditure) as much as they have given it: "we cannot imagine that, having overthrown capitalism, people will at once learn to work for society"—without some compulsion. Hence laws, regulations, a state will be needed—a state of the armed workers themselves, exercising collective control.

But in the course of time, as the "economic ripeness" of socialist society develops—how long this must take, "we do not and cannot know"—the practice of democracy by the mass of the people, managing the state themselves, rising to "*independent* participation, not only in voting and elections but also in the everyday administration of affairs" (Chapter VI) will bring about a change in their own outlook. People will become "so accustomed to observing the fundamental rules of social life", and their labour will reach such a high level of productivity, as the antithesis between mental and physical labour disappears with their expanding cultural advance, that "they will voluntarily work *according to their ability*." It will then no longer be necessary to ensure that they receive from the general product of society what they have given it; they can take what they need. With that, "the need for government begins to disappear": the state will begin to "wither away." Socialism will grow into Communism.

The Soviet people have begun their preparations for that higher phase of socialist society, in which Communism will be built. That is the meaning of the new Seven-Year Plan, and of the changes in many spheres which have already begun in Soviet life—only a foretaste of the changes yet to come. Before long, as they catch up with the Soviet Union in their economic and cultural transformation, the other socialist countries will also be setting about the building of Communism. In this respect, too, Lenin's *State and Revolution* is receiving its most grand and historic justification. The sooner all class-conscious British workers learn its lessons, strengthening the Communist Party to put them into practice, the more certain will be the coming of a Socialist Britain.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Fifty Years of Organised Self-Help

Katherine Hood

JUST fifty years ago Mr. Lloyd George, then Chancellor of the Exchequer in a Liberal Government, announced that the Government was endeavouring to frame a scheme of insurance against unemployment and sickness. This scheme was something new. The previous year the first arrangements for old age pensions had been introduced, providing for pensions financed direct by the Exchequer and awarded after a Means Test.

But the insurance scheme for sickness and unemployment which finally emerged as the National Insurance Act of 1911 was to be financed by contributions from employer, employee and the State.

One of Mr. Lloyd George's biographers has commented:

> "This Act set the mould, and it built the base, for all the other Acts of social reform which have led our people forward since then towards the concept of the Welfare State." (*Tempestuous Journey*, by Frank Owen, p. 206.)

Since such generalisations are nowadays common form, it is worth taking a look at the part played by National Insurance over the fifty years or so since its inception and seeing what lessons we can learn for the future.

What Benefits Has National Insurance Brought?

To try to measure the effect of National Insurance is not a simple matter. We are looking back over a half-century of violent change—a half-century which covers the First World War, the turbulent twenties, the hungry thirties, the Second World War, the Cold War, and "You've never had it so good". During this period the standard of living of working people has indeed improved out of all recognition; but since, nevertheless, half a million unemployed were signing on at the Labour Exchange last winter, it is appropriate to begin by tracing some of the changes in unemployment benefit since National Insurance started.

In the table below we omit some of the brief fluctuations in benefit which took place just after the First World War and during the Second World War. Apart from this, however, it shows the benefit paid to a single adult man over the years. Since the amount of benefit awarded means nothing unless we know also what it could buy in terms of goods, the benefit is in the second column reworked in terms of 1959 prices—i.e. it shows roughly the *value* of the man's benefits in each of the years chosen in terms of present-day prices.

Year	*Standard weekly unemployment benefit for a single adult man*	*Purchasing power of the benefit in terms of January 1959 prices*
	s. d.	s. d.
1913	7 0	30 0
1922	15 0	35 3
1924	18 0	44 2
1927	18 0	46 1
1930	17 0	46 3
1932	15 3	45 7
1935	17 0	50 10
1938	17 0	46 9
1948	26 0	40 10
1952	32 6	40 5
1955	40 0	45 5
Jan. 1959 ..	50 0	50 0

The position shown in this table may astonish some people. It will be noted that the 50s. paid in 1959 is worth less than the 17s. paid in the peak year of 1935, and that until the substantial increase given in 1958, which brought the benefit up to 50s., the level paid in the post-war years has been consistently below that paid in the hungry thirties.

Does all this mean that the unemployed man of today is being forced down to a standard which is little, if at all better than the standards of the hungry thirties? No, it means nothing of the sort. But the reason for the difference lies outside the National Insurance scheme. For one thing the present effects of a prolonged period of full employment, which has enabled working class people to save and so supplement their unemployment pay with private resources and, indeed, in some cases enables them to win compensation for dismissal from their employers. But apart from this the unemployed in the inter-war years were actually expected to *live* on their benefit—and indeed did so, and went hungry and cold on it.

A man who fell out of benefit had to go to the local poor law authorities which operated scales in most places actually below those of standard

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

benefit. Later, when such unemployed were transferred to the Unemployment Assistance Board, the latter's scale rates were also below standard benefit. Today National Assistance Board scales have been increased to something currently and officially regarded as "subsistence" level, and the unemployed man without other resources can apply to the Board to get his benefit supplemented so as to bring it up to this level, after a Means Test, which is very different from that of the thirties, though it is humiliating enough to most people nevertheless. We can see, therefore, that if the unemployed man has a higher standard now than he had in the thirties, it has not been achieved in the main by any contributory National Insurance scheme; it is savings during full employment, plus employers' compensation, plus National Assistance, plus Family Allowances, both of which are outside the National Insurance scheme and paid for by the Exchequer.

Since unemployment benefit has done little more than hold its own in value in a period of rising standards, it follows that the gap between what a man can earn while at work and what he gets, as of right, if unemployed, has grown much wider. Information on average earnings before the late thirties is not readily available; in the following table we can give only the approximate position. The results are pretty striking. They show that unemployment benefit, which in 1924 was equivalent to nearly a third of average male earnings, has since the end of the war been equivalent to less than one-fifth.

Year	*Unemployment benefit for a single man*	*Average industrial earnings of an adult man*	*Benefit expressed as a percentage of average earnings*
	s. d.	s. d.	%
1913	7 0	33 2	21.0
1924	18 0	56 3	32.0
1935	17 0	64 6	26.3
1938	17 0	69 0	24.3
1948	26 0	137 11	18.8
1952	32 6	178 6	18.2
1955	40 0	222 11	17.9
1958	50 0	256 8	19.4

It is quite clear that while the superior bargaining power of the trade unions in a time of full employment has been put to good use in raising wages, National Insurance benefits have altogether failed to keep pace with the rise in other standards.

What of the two other great classes of persons who rely on National Insurance—the sick and the old? Sickness benefit was 15s. a week throughout the inter-war period; contributory old age pensions of 10s. a week were introduced in 1926. Both remained fixed far below unemployment benefit until the 1946 Act, when they were unified under the main scheme, and since then in the main have kept pace with unemployment benefit. Both are therefore much higher than in the inter-war years, but again neither are enough to live on, and those without other resources have to get supplementation from National Assistance. Though higher in real terms than they were before the war, they have hardly reached the level of unemployment benefit paid in the hungry thirties.

What governed the fixing of these benefits from time to time and why were some so much higher than others between the wars?

The Fight for "Full Maintenance"

When pensions and benefits were first introduced they were never intended to provide for full maintenance; they were, on the contrary, intended to *supplement* the independent resources of the recipient. Nobody was expected to live on their benefits. As late as 1923 an Interdepartmental Committee on Public Assistance Administration said of unemployment benefit, "Benefits under the scheme, like cash benefits under the Health Insurance scheme, have not been designed to cover all the responsibilities of the unemployed person in all circumstances, but rather to supplement private effort in mitigating distress due to involuntary unemployment."* The same was true of pensions.

The first major change in principle came in 1924 in respect of unemployment benefit only, when the first Labour Government increased it to 18s. together with increases for dependants. Pitiful as this 18s. seems to us now (at present-day prices it would be equivalent to rather over 44s.) it was in fact as much as, or more than, people were expected to live on if they were on public assistance. The Minister of Labour at the time, indeed, admitted a change amounting to a fresh principle, saying: "The principle of this Bill is that an honest man shall not starve though he be unemployed; neither shall he be driven to the guardians; that he shall be paid a sum of money which at any rate will keep him from starvation." (June 18th, 1924.)

In theory at any rate from 1924 onwards until the outbreak of war unemployment benefit was supposed to provide "maintenance", and those who were getting it were made to live on it. No such principle was ever applied to the old age pensioners or those on sickness benefit during this whole period. It was not until the publication of the Beveridge Report in 1942 that the principle was at last clearly stated and accepted by all parties—and indeed by the country as a whole—that all weekly benefits should be enough to live on on their own and without other resources. Beveridge's idea of "minimum subsistence" was much too low to be tolerated, and in any case to this day pensions and benefits have

* Quoted in Final Report of Royal Commission on Unemployment Insurance (1931) para. 31.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

never reached even Beveridge's minimum. The fact remains that this acceptance of the principle was a major break-through for the working-class movement, and we should be on our guard against those who now wish to forget it.

Meanwhile, why was it that the principle of "maintenance" was broadly accepted for the unemployed all through the twenties and thirties, but never accepted for the old and the sick until the Beveridge Report? It was not that the misery among old people was not just as acute. Even at the beginning of the slump in the thirties people of pension age greatly outnumbered the unemployed. There was no lack of talk about the problem of the aged at the time—no lack of resolutions at annual conferences of trade unions and Labour Parties.

The answer must be that the unemployed were in the vanguard of the great class battles which raged throughout the whole period. From 1921 onwards the movement among the unemployed was led by the National Unemployed Workers' Movement with Wal Hannington, a well-known Communist, at its head. The first great "jump" in unemployment benefit in 1924 was in direct response to the massive demonstrations and hunger marches which had been taking place, behind the demand "work or maintenance". Of course the ruling class counter-attacked later—in the 1931 financial crisis a vicious 10 per cent cut was imposed—but the ceaseless struggle and agitation led by the N.U.W.M., the immense demonstrations, probably the largest ever seen in this country, forced the restoration of the cuts in 1934. This restoration coincided with the end of a long period of falling prices, which explains the reason why benefit touched its peak value at that time.

No comparable movement took place in those years among the old age pensioners, who never really got organised until after the Second World War. One cannot avoid noticing that it is the same generation which fought for the rights of the unemployed in the twenties and thirties which is now in the vanguard fighting for the old age pensioners. Born well before the turn of the century, this is a generation which has produced many thousands of tough working class leaders. Mature in struggle, experienced in organisation, it is a generation which understands the need for working class solidarity as no other before it. It has forced the issue of pensions on to the political agenda of today just as it forced the issue of work or maintenance on to the agenda of yesterday. Whatever may lie ahead it will go down in history as the generation which wouldn't lie down.

Whether or not benefits should be enough for "full maintenance" is the first basic question around which the battle has raged; there is, however, a second basic issue, that of how these benefits should be paid for. The method of financing National Insurance today is basically governed by an idea which has been sedulously fostered by the ruling class for over a century—the idea that "self-help" is the cure for poverty.

The Object of a Contributory Scheme

At the time when the 1911 Insurance Act was passed and for many decades before the Poor Law Guardians had been gravely troubled by a seemingly insoluble problem—that of distinguishing between the "deserving" and the "undeserving" poor. Many of them operated rules whereby outdoor relief was withheld or reduced in the case of the "undeserving" who included, of course, those addicted to drink, "immoral" habits, "indolent" habits, "improvident" habits, "extravagant" habits and the rest; the "deserving" poor on the other hand were those who could show that they were moral, temperate and above all *thrifty*. Yet this in turn led to its own curious paradox—the penalisation of the thrifty. For those who could prove that they were thrifty were frequently debarred from receiving relief for that very reason. For example, the possession of a cottage, an allotment, a tiny investment or a post office annuity might automatically bar a person from being eligible for relief. This puzzle whereby the least deserving were most in need and the most deserving the least in need encompassed the guardians whichever way they turned, but it had one advantage—it was a "heads I win, tails you lose" situation which enabled them to pare down the weekly allowance either way. And the more thrift could be encouraged the more could be saved in poor law relief.

The trouble was, however, that, apart from the "shocking" tendencies to thriftlessness among the working class, the arrangements for self-help were so very imperfect. The Friendly Societies, the main channel whereby skilled workers could and did attempt to insure against sickness or old age, had a long record of corruption, mismanagement and bankruptcy. Not infrequently the members of these societies lost every penny they had contributed towards keeping themselves in their old age.

The solution to these problems gradually became clear to the governing class. What was necessary was that self-help should be *organised*—and better still made *compulsory*. With a state guarantee and even the help of a state grant the workers' contributions would be safe—moreover, a compulsory scheme meant that even the "thriftless" worker could be compelled to practice "self-help" whether he liked it or not.

The upshot of it all was the National Insurance Act of 1911 which provided, for certain categories, unemployment and sickness benefit paid for by

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

contributions from employer, worker and the state.

The arrangements for old age pensions followed initially a different pattern, for in spite of many decades of discussion and departmental committees nobody had ever been able to evolve a contributory scheme which the lower-paid—and this meant particularly women as well as agricultural workers—could possibly afford. By 1925, however, wages had risen sufficiently to make possible a contributory scheme of old age pensions also.

Beveridge and the 1946 National Insurance Act completed what had thus been a gradual process. Hitherto confined to the manual workers, National Insurance was at one blow widened to include virtually the whole population. How enormously gratifying to those who sought to abolish "thriftlessness" fifty years ago had they lived to see it! One gigantic scheme of compulsory organised self-help!

What have been the financial results of contributory schemes?

As the scope of National Insurance has widened, and indeed as the resources of working people increased due to improvements in wages and standards of living, so more and more emphasis has been placed on the *self*-help aspect, in the sense that the insured person has had to bear an increasingly large proportion of the cost, and the Exchequer an ever smaller proportion of the cost. This tendency can be seen from the table below which shows the sources from which National Insurance has derived its funds in certain selected years. For pre-war years we give only the last year before the war, not by any means one of the pre-war years in which the Exchequer paid the most. It will be seen that even though we exclude non-contributory pensions which were still being paid on a Means Test financed entirely by the Exchequer, and include only contributory schemes for unemployment, sickness and old age, the Exchequer was nevertheless responsible for 40 per cent of the cost.*

In 1949-50, the first full year of the 1946 National Insurance Act, the Exchequer contribution was down to 26 per cent. Later in 1951 the Labour Government cut drastically the Exchequer contribution, and subsequent increases in pensions and benefits were financed largely out of increases in employers' and insured persons' contributions, so that the Exchequer's share was reduced to between 13 and 14 per cent. It is noticeable that by the early fifties, after these cuts, the Exchequer payment at around £70 million a year was actually less in money terms than the £80 million paid before the war. The new scheme now going through the House for a "graduated" pension for the better paid still keeps the low proportion for the Exchequer at around 15 per cent to 16 per cent, and the starting sum at £170 million in 1961-62 is still less in real terms than the £80 million paid by the Exchequer before the war. We can see therefore that while an ever increasing share of the burden of National Insurance is being pushed on to the shoulders of the insured person, the Exchequer is in fact not only getting away with a much smaller share but is also paying less in real terms than before the war.

How Workers' Contributions Have Been Used

The significance of contributory schemes, however, is not just that they have been used to ensure that the workers pay an ever-growing proportion of

* This 40 per cent does it is true, also include a small amount in respect of medical treatment, now included in the National Health Service. But it amounted to relatively little.

FINANCE OF NATIONAL INSURANCE

	Employers and insured persons	*Exchequer*	*Income from investments, etc.*	*Total*	*Proportions from*	
					Contributions	*Exchequer*
	£m.	£m.	£m.	£m.	%	%
1938-39[1] (Old scheme) ..	107	80	10	197	54	40
1949-50[2] (Nat. Ins.) ..	360	136	26	522	69	26
1953-54[2] (Nat. Ins.) ..	440	70	44	554	79	13
1957-58[2] (Nat. Ins. estimated)	567	101	50	718	79	14
1961-62[3] (Current Tory Scheme)	802	170	50	1,022	78	16
1981-82[3] (Current Tory Scheme)	1,219	203	50	1,472	82	14

[1] Unemployment Insurance, Health Insurance, Contributory Pensions and Old Age Pensions paid by virtue of Contributory Pensions Acts. *Not* including non-contributory (Old Age) Pensions which would have added another £16 million to the Exchequer contribution only. *Source* from which these figures are compiled is Beveridge Report, p. 241.

[2] Selected years taken from the National Insurance accounts and the Government Actuary Reports.

[3] Estimates of the Government Actuary for the current scheme still going through the House.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the cost, it is also that they have been used to keep benefits low.

Since the war every demand for increased pensions has been resisted with the counter-argument that the weekly wage earner cannot afford or does not want to pay a higher contribution. A contributory scheme requires that highly artificial—but for the ruling class, extremely convenient—device, a separate National Insurance Fund into which all contributions go and out of which all benefits are paid. Since the war we have seen how over and over again the threat of a "deficit" in the Fund has been used to refuse higher pensions. A "deficit" in the Fund simply means that the amount coming in in contributions in any given year does not equal the amount paid out in benefits. A "deficit" may arise when the Government's own national budget is showing a substantial surplus. As an indication of the state of the country's finances, the extent of its resources, or what the country could afford to give in old age pensions at any given moment, the position of the Fund has no significance whatever.

After the war when the Fund unexpectedly began to show, not a deficit, but a surplus, this was, of course, very embarrassing to the Labour Government which indeed hastily reduced its own contribution—no doubt in the hope of bringing about a deficit once more. This matter of a surplus or a deficit is, however, an artificially contrived affair. In spite of this, the question of the "solvency" of the Fund is presented as a matter of vital national interest in the Labour movement, which allows itself to get bogged down in technical discussions about whether the scheme is "actuarially sound" or "unsound", "funding" systems, "assessment systems" and all the rest of it, almost as though man was made for the Fund and not the Fund for man.

All this is not a post-war phenomenon; it is inseparable from any contributory scheme, and exactly the same arguments were used between the wars to keep down unemployment benefit—indeed to cut unemployment benefit. Thus during the late twenties when unemployment rose disastrously, the Unemployment Insurance Fund began to show a "deficit" every year, and had to borrow in order to be able to satisfy the claims to unemployment benefit of those insured. In 1930 the Labour Government set up a Royal Commission to enquire into the Unemployment Insurance scheme and to make recommendations as to how it could be made "solvent and self-supporting". The Royal Commission stated that "we believe it to be of very great importance that immediate measures should be taken to arrest the deterioration of the scheme. The grounds for this view are partly financial. But we are concerned also with the preservation of the principles upon which, in our opinion, any insurance scheme must rest." (First Report, para. 73.) They also said: "If insurance, i.e. organised self-help, is to play any considerable part in the treatment of unemployment a first essential step is . . . to reintroduce into the insurance scheme some of the features which have been removed." (Final Report, para. 211.)

So in the name of maintaining the "insurance principle" and the "solvency of the Fund" the Royal Commission recommended severe cuts in benefit and severe limitation to the period during which benefit could be drawn, putting all who were unemployed for longer than this on to the most vicious and humiliating Means Test. The National Unemployed Workers' Movement declared:

> "We contend that the main issue is not the solvency or otherwise of the Unemployment Insurance scheme but the health and well-being of millions of men, women and children who are now suffering from unemployment." (See *Ten Lean Years* by Wal Hannington, page 91.)

However, the Royal Commission's proposals were in essence adopted; the economy cuts were made and resulted in indescribable suffering. All well worth while, for the insurance principle was preserved and the Fund was saved

The Labour Party's New Scheme and the Lessons of the Past

Two years ago the Labour Party published a new scheme for National Superannuation which involved proposals which in some respects were quite new—a scheme of graduated pensions related to previous earnings and graduated contributions. The Tories followed suit by introducing a limited scheme providing for graduated pensions and graduated contributions; this scheme is now going through the House. It is unnecessary to consider it in any detail here, since the increased pensions to which anybody will ultimately be entitled are derisory in amount, while the existing old age pensioners, and about one-third of future old age pensioners, get nothing out of it anyway.

The Labour Party scheme, however, is of a somewhat different order; since not only the Labour Party but also the trade union movement is committed to it, the principles on which it is based may well determine the whole way in which the old and sick, and the unemployed are going to be treated for decades to come. Indeed, in committing itself to this scheme the movement has taken a most serious step.

We have seen that the vital battleground of principle over the last fifty years has firstly centred round the question as to whether or not pensions should provide "full maintenance".

The Labour Party proposes for existing old age pensioners a "floor" of £3 for a single person and £4 10s. for a married couple. This may be higher in

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

real terms than Beveridge's so-called subsistence minimum, but for most people it will not reach the official pretty harsh subsistence level operated currently by the National Assistance Board (for a single person, £2 5s., plus rent allowance; for a married couple, £3 16s., plus rent allowance, plus, very often, extras of one kind or another). Unless the pension is at least enough to take everybody off National Assistance, with some margin to spare, it cannot be classed as equal to "full maintenance" and the present generation of old age pensioners will go on being means-tested until they die.

What of the pensioners of the future? The pensions provided for those who reach pensionable age in forty or fifty years time, of course, look good to us now. But those to be awarded to persons retiring within the next five to ten years are not so good, particularly for the lower paid. Women pensioners outnumber men, and women's average earnings are still only around £6 a week which means that most such women would be retiring for the next ten years on pensions which are only a few shillings above the £3 "floor". When it comes to the question of "full maintenance" therefore the Labour Party's scheme does not pass the test either for existing old age pensioners nor for those retiring in the next few years.

Moreover, the scheme covers pensions only; unemployment and sickness benefits remain at their present level.

What about the other focal point of battle, the financing of the scheme?

Firstly, the largest share is to come from the employers. We should not be under any illusion that this involves "making the rich pay". Usually it does not because those insurance contributions paid by the employer do not, on the whole, mean a squeeze in profits, or a reduction in the employers' own income; they rank as a "cost" and get passed on to the consumer as far as possible. Secondly, a very large share is to be paid by the insured person, and this in turn involves massive increases in weekly contributions, which are already excessive. The third point to note is that the Exchequer contribution will amount to between 21 per cent and 24 per cent of the total, *but this is for the pensions fund only*—when the National Insurance Fund is seen *as a whole*, including contributions in respect of unemployment, sickness, etc., the Exchequer contribution will form a much smaller proportion than 24 per cent, possibly less than 20 per cent. Let us remember that before the war the Exchequer contribution was around 40 per cent. The fourth point to note is that far *more* is going to be paid into the Fund in its early years in contributions than is needed currently to pay out in pensions. The surplus of income over expenditure is to be used for investment; the interest on these investments is expected to form a substantial part of the income of the Fund in future years. Thus the very high contributions paid by the insured contributor are not going entirely to old age pensioners in the initial period, they are to be used partly to finance the Labour Party's scheme for acquiring Government shares in private industry. It is calculated that the surpluses provided in the next twenty years will aggregate some £6,000 million invested by the end of that time. The theory is, of course, that sums put aside for investment now will provide for the increased productivity needed to support the pensions in ten, twenty or maybe fifty years' time. What this means is that the workers should be obliged, out of what is left of their earnings *after* providing surplus value for the employer, to save sufficient to invest to help keep themselves in their old age.

The Way the Truth is Twisted

It is claimed by the Labour Party that it is more difficult for a Government to cut benefits if they are financed by contributions than it is if they are financed by the Exchequer:

> "As long as benefits are 'earned' by payment of contributions and financed out of an Insurance Fund, they are felt to be something which the worker receives as of right and which no politician can take away from him." (*National Superannuation*, page 10.)

However much this may be "felt" to be the case, experience has proved the opposite. The fact that workers had contributed to unemployment insurance did not prevent the Government from slashing those benefits in 1931—moreover, the case for doing so was, as we have seen, partly argued on the grounds that we must return to the "insurance principle".

It is claimed by the Labour Party that it is not the "insurance principle" which has failed but the scheme of *flat* rate benefits and pensions which automatically means that the lower paid cannot receive a decent pension unless contributions are raised to a level that they cannot afford. Of course, if it is assumed that the workers must finance their own pensions the lower paid will not be able to afford a decent pension. But why must we stick to this assumption at all?

It is claimed by some of the younger and more "advanced" thinkers among the Labour Party—notably Mr. Peter Townsend, who was one of the technical sub-committee members which worked out the Labour Party's scheme—that it is the emphasis placed on achieving a "minimum" by the movement in the past which has helped keep pensions low.* But as we have seen pensions and benefits have never reached "subsistence minimum"—not even

* See essay in *Conviction*, published by McGibbon and Kee, 1958.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Beveridge's subsistence minimum let alone the kind of minimum that the movement should tolerate. It will be time enough to forget this principle when it has been achieved, and not until.

The Labour Party claims that it is the gap between the *individual's* earnings and his ultimate pension which is the cause of poverty, rather than the fact that the flat rate pension is too low for everyone, and therefore proposes that pensions should in future be related to the individual's former earnings. Is there anything wrong with this idea? It might be argued that pensions are so graded in all socialist countries. But let us not forget that so long as we have capitalism a person's earnings are not necessarily related to the contribution he makes to society. Useless jobs are often better paid under capitalism than useful ones. An advertising man earns more than a miner; an estate agent earns more than an agricultural worker. And women get paid unequally for equal work. Whatever may be said for or against grading pensions according to earnings it projects into old age many of the inequalities which exist under capitalism and which we seek to abolish.

The Labour Party's scheme provides for enforced savings for investment purposes by the workers, on the theory that with prudent investment now the benefit will be reaped in the form of higher production when the time comes for the pension to be paid out. Now investment may be necessary, but under capitalism it is never certain that it will result in increased production. Supposing that as a result of a slump the annual interest on the Fund's investments fails to materialise, what then? Will benefits be cut again in order to keep the Fund solvent?

The scheme is in reality no more than an elaborate exposition of bourgeois ideas. For does it not elevate the god of self-help to heights hitherto undreamed of? This same god which has corroded every step which the workers have tried to take towards "full maintenance"? Compulsory thrift for the individual based strictly on his or her capacity to save—here indeed we see the aspirations of the Victorian self-help enthusiasts come magnificently to fruition. True many will fall by the wayside, as they have in the past—the badly paid, the women, along with a whole generation of existing old age pensioners. They, we must assume, need only merit our disapproval: they rank as the undeserving poor. This then is what the advanced thinkers of the Labour Party have given us—a set of nineteenth-century ideas dolled up in twentieth-century dress.

The essence of the matter is really very simple. The working class movement has fought in the past for full maintenance given as of right without a Means Test for the old, the sick, the unemployed and all those who through no fault of their own are unable to work and provide for themselves. And because great wealth can be and is produced by British workers there is no reason why this decent standard of living should not be provided both now and in the future. And so long as the British worker does not receive the full value of his labour but forfeits some of it to enrich others, it is in his interests that these benefits and pensions should so far as possible be paid for *by* those whom he has enriched, which means they should be paid for largely out of taxation.

But the philosophy of self-help has been used by the ruling class ever since the dawn of capitalism to do just the opposite—to maintain privilege while forcing the worker to pull himself up by his own shoe-strings. It has been used, moreover, to divide the workers, to weaken their organisation, to substitute the pursuit of personal security for the pursuit of security for everyone.

It has nothing in common with the principles which the working class movement evolved for itself long years ago—the principles of class solidarity and "each for all and all for each" and "united we stand". It is such principles which have enabled the movement to win victories in the past. And so it will be in the future.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Human Relations"

Jack Moody

"GO down the welfare, she'll help you." The "welfare" was also the woman who attended to first-aid in the factory. The benefit for the employer was less time lost on production. For the worker, less absence from work which he could not afford. My recollections of the welfare are that they were friendly old sticks.

When the war came and the workers pressed for more say in the control of industry, A.R.P. and other war-time regulations, the employers, seeing the sacrosanct managerial functions being blasphemed, used the welfare department as the rear-guard to work out tactics. It became the nucleus of what is now the personnel department.

Some firms already had a department for engaging workers. The duties of the new personnel department were much wider. Engaging workers, wages, human relations. There is no end to the subdivision of these. Intelligence testing, categorising workers—the whole a confidence-destroying process moving towards Huxley's new world. Following a wages claim, graphs, figures, arguments are produced showing scientifically the irresponsibility of the claim. Human relations—I suppose that means keeping us soppy but happy. I always identify in my mind with that period a certain personnel manager—ex-Indian army officer. I wonder how many confidences were used for belly laughs in his after-dinner stories. That was in the formative days. When he was sacked he cried plaintively of the injustice of it all, and why people turned Communist.

I know one fellow who went to the personnel many years ago. He had quarrelled with his wife, and separated for a few weeks. He wanted advice. I suppose every normal couple has a similar problem in the early days of marriage. They reunited and have since lived quite happily. A few weeks ago he wanted a transfer to a new job and was told that the record of his past domestic life suggested he was unsuitable. Unfortunately he begged us not to make an issue of it because of the publicity.

I make the point to show the detailed dossier that is being compiled of workers in industry. Some appendage to M.I.5, eh!

If workers' participation had been denied there would have been quite a different post-war story. The ideas of socialism were inspiring people all over the world with the vision of a new kind of life. The Maquis, Greek, Albanian, Italian, Czech, Hungarian and every other resistance movement made up of ordinary people had taken charge and were running their countries. We in Britain, gripped by the same ideals, and knowing that fascism and capitalism were separated only by degree, saw the way forward as breaking the power of the employers and capitalism. If the employers had chosen to fight it out, there is no doubt what the outcome would have been. The spirit of the 1945 General Election coupled to a real fight against the employers would have been invincible. But the employers understand the class struggle and, however stupid some of them appear to be,* at that time when the natural divisions in their ranks had been temporarily joined by an unlimited arms market and the costs plus 10 per cent saw, as a class, the dialectics of the situation. The workers then found that instead of battling with a direct opposition, the struggle was being absorbed by a bindweed of works, canteen, social, efficiency, benevolent, methods, suggestions and safety committees and miles of minutes to record all the yap.

If you want to talk about a problem you'll find no difficulty there—a position comparable to after the First World War when the Whitley Councils were set up in a period of growing mass pressure.

It would have been incorrect and impossible, anyhow, to have opposed these committees. If we took over industry there would be similar committees, but with a different composition and objectives. Many workers saw them as fulfilling the role of the Trade Unions.

The need was to maintain and build our Trade Union organisation and strengthen it. In most factories the workers insisted on all works committee members being shop stewards as well. Constitutionally this has protected the position but the real safeguard is the organisation and understanding of the workers, and in this, Trade Union principles are not sufficient, but the class struggle has to be seen.

The personnel department is a specialised section which, in addition to handling welfare problems, is expected to control and guide the various committees within "Company Policy", and create a collaboration between management and worker. Questions of importance to workers like ventilation, lighting, congestion are discussed, but what is sought is more freedom to introduce new methods, schedule changes, production campaigns, improvement in

* That is part of their stock-in-trade. When they act stupid it is because they cannot argue morally against the issue at hand, but know instinctively they must not agree.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

efficiency, and when that has been done, to make it easier to reduce staff.

For this, personnel officers are now required to have degrees in psychology, which to me is being able to say something yet mean something else. To digress a little, this does not seem to be confined to industry; whether it's due to advertising or salesmen or personnel tactics one finds many people thinking of how things should be *presented* to make them acceptable. It's becoming part of our way of life.

Psychology

I went to the doctor the other week for an examination; he measured my chest. "H'mm, thirty-eight—breathe in". I did. "H'mm, forty-one—you know Floyd Patterson hasn't a much bigger expansion than that." I glowed, he measured my waist. "H'mm, thirty-seven".

The glow went. I knew I looked nearly parallel. Sure geometric accuracy is beautiful but who wants to look like a tube?

"What's this Floyd Patterson business?" I asked. "Surgery Psychology?" "No," he said dryly, "Bedside Bull".

Anyway, to get back to the point. In addition to these personal qualities required, various organisations have sprung up to give co-ordination and advice. Personnel Managers' Associations, Works' Managers' Associations, Personnel Officers' Associations, besides the Economic League, Common Cause and so on.

The literature issued by these is circulated to the officers. I noticed a bulletin from the Economic League the other day on one of their desks. Reading upside down I saw that big efforts to build the Communist Party were being made in large factories. My factory was ringed in ink. I hope I can justify that honour.

A sinister cloak and dagger mentality is being generated from such sources as these, not only to thwart any movement of the workers, but more subtle, to attack in terms of ideas, especially among apprentices and young people.

Although not a part of personnel, all those people engaged in the training of the young come within the scope of their influence. Apprentices have lectures, discussions and debates. Superficially barring politics, but instilling into them the legality of things. Reverence for the *status-quo* so far as society is concerned. They have lectures on the history of the Trade Union movement. Factual with dates and events, but missing out the vital reasons for the movement, and concluding that necessary as were Trade Unions in the early days of the Industrial Revolution, things are different today.

Although to my knowledge pressure is not brought upon them everywhere to attend Economic League Schools, certain boys are selected and invited to attend. Under circumstances where in big factories there is keen competition for apprentice places and they have not yet become part of workshop life, few boys refuse.

The kind of debates the boys take part in—"Should atom bombs be banned?", "Is a sovereign necessary?", "Is a Channel tunnel necessary?"—all non-political, mind you, under a teacher's guidance can develop a fierce jingoism within them.

At one time loud claims were made for the impartiality of the personnel department. Probably the only time this claim is made now is in answer to the direct question, or to new apprentices to make them think of things as sacred, and of personnel officers as the adjudicators of any divine lapse in not explaining carefully where we fit in and what is our share of worldly goods or how much say we are entitled to.

Their partiality as paid servants to act in their employers' interests is so apparent that no one thinks of them seriously as other than that.

Careers

One of the difficulties in the battle of ideas is that students are seeing personnel jobs as careers, and on the face of it the idea of welfare work appeals to some people as a way of genuinely doing good. They can start their working life with good intentions but become corrupted by the machine. It will not always work that way though. The other week I was asked to give my views on apprentice training to a student from the London School of Economics. After discussing it with other stewards and deciding we had nothing to lose, with another steward I met the young lady. After saying what I thought, I asked her what career she wanted. She was quite definite. Personnel officer. That was what she had trained for. I commiserated with her on such a lowly ambition, which provoked a discussion.

She saw it as a reasonably well-paid job and a socially necessary one to keep harmony between employer and worker. The news that day was Nyasaland. I compared the personnel duties with the presentation of that event by the newspapers. A couple of days later came that wonderful demonstration by students at the L.S.E.

A coincidence, yes, but also symbolic.

I have dealt mostly with the personnel department because they are the specialists, but the ideas have permeated throughout management. One of the most dangerous types is the skilled technician who, although becoming a manager or director, retains the workshop touch. After a meeting with one, he pushed his cigarette box towards me and asked: "Well, how's things?" "No thanks," I said, "don't smoke." Alfie next to me said: "Roll me own", but I had to smile watching him stretch out the straggly

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bits and dust from the corner of his tin, into a fag about an eighth inch in diameter.

We countered with a gibe on industry not being able to use its technical resources to the full.

Of course, he doesn't disagree; of course, you are right, but we must be realists until every country is thinking the same—until then we must look after our families by making the factory prosperous. Don't rock the boat, boys. I can't remember if it was a go-slow or a stoppage that finally decided the issue which we were in the office about. I know he never agreed to our claim at that meeting.

In the field of ideas, I find that I am being involved more and more with young people in religious discussion. They say that religion is not the same as it was. That although science has disproved many previous beliefs, it is now proving the existence of an almighty.

The vastness and knowledge of present-day science should be able to understand living matter. It is big enough to, but because it does not, it therefore shows that only an almighty has the key.

This logic is not a serious hindrance because people, with a little thought, would soon see its shallowness. What is more serious is that coupled to it is said that if we concentrate on material thinking, then we lose the spiritual qualities. That is something outside of any reasoning.

Christian Fellowship Groups and similar bodies are encouraged and given facilities in the factories to hold their service—or would it be meetings. I dunno.

I know the secretary of such a group whom I worked with as a shop steward fifteen years ago. Arising from a challenge I was let in to speak. He spoke as well—of a fair day's work for a fair day's pay. Come back to the bench, Bill.

A personnel manager of a big factory was heard to approve the idea of such Christian Fellowship Groups as a counter to Communist ideas. I don't know how much success they have had. I do know in the same factory the officers have consolidated their position with easy well-paid jobs. This religious question is surely the last bastion for capitalism, and exposes more than anything their bankruptcy of ideas.

Although reams of minutes are published for various committees their presentation is a most important factor, and the endless struggle to have them written in a way which does not suggest a different point of view is a full-time job itself. A recent example was a wage claim. There was a rejection. The members involved went on a partial strike refusing to work on certain key jobs. The claim was won, but in the publicity after, anyone not involved would think the company had been considering an increase and had decided voluntarily to give it.

One of the ancillary dangers is that workers tend to direct their feelings against the personnel department as makers of policy, and see them as the biggest enemy instead of being only the tools of the employers.

This is understandable, for in any question which involves policy, such as wages, holidays and most conditions, the personnel are involved.

Although I have made references to the organisations which try to keep a cohesion between the personnel departments in different factories, we have to estimate how far this works before other factors come into play.

Ambition

Whatever loyalties a personnel officer has to a company, his philosophy makes him loyal first to himself. He does so much talking to us about the freedom we have that he would be a peculiar person if he did not follow those freedoms. I remember a personnel manager being reported in a newspaper as saying that workers who left jobs are "industrial hoboes" causing expense to industry; afterwards he denied saying he meant what the paper said, but I know of a personnel department in a big factory, where there has been a stream of people in and out over the last ten years.

The reason for this has been their ambition for more money or a better job. When these people meet they not only talk about the line, they talk among themselves, and are there any vacancies?

A factory does not operate to keep a personnel department. It exists to make goods and sell them and when another producing giant moves into the same line of business, that is not a firm foundation for unity.

Although I must say the personnel is much stronger than it was, the skilled technical manager seems to me still to look upon the personnel department as living on the ill-gotten gains of the industry.

Occasionally, this shows itself at meetings when the technician wants to be "objective" and is prepared to give away a point to get the factory working, and the personnel wants to be "objective" and stands firm because it sees various principles violated. Or *vice versa*.

How can we estimate then what our attitude should be?

Firstly, the need for flexibility. But this must be understood to mean doing what is right at the right time. Our best defence is to build up strong Trade Union organisation, and above all a strong Party branch. Trade Union consciousness is only a fraction of the battle, If ever the need for a strong Party in the factories was needed to explain the class struggle and expose the suave seducing tactics employed, it is now. If that is done, then the workers involved will be able to handle the practical cases as they arise.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Future Employment of British Scientists

Brian Hayes

BOTH socialists and progressive capitalists recognise that Britain's future prosperity is linked with our ability to develop the use of science and technology to the full. As a result, the government has been forced to introduce schemes for the training of more scientists and engineers—schemes which everyone except the Tory Government recognises to be inadequate to meet the country's needs. However, this short distance seems all that the socialists and capitalists can travel together. At this moment much of Britain's industrial capacity is under-used, unemployment is here, and whereas eighteen months ago industry said that it had jobs for about 25 per cent more scientists and engineers, now they too face the threat of unemployment. In this situation we need to be aware of the present position and to develop a clear policy, both of short-term and long-term demands for the utilisation of science.

The Present Pattern of British Industry

In 1958 Great Britain's gross national product was £20,000 million. A little over a quarter of this (£5,200 million) came from the export of goods and services. The money so earned has to pay for the import of about half our food, and many of the raw materials necessary for our industrial products. This gives some idea of Britain's unique dependence on international trade—a dependence which is bound to continue in the immediate future.

The principal items exported are: engineering products, 44 per cent, which is about twice the pre-war level; chemicals, 8 per cent; metals, 13 per cent; and textiles, 9 per cent, or about one-third of the pre-war figure.

The effectiveness of British capitalism is illustrated by what is happening to our share of world trade. Between 1953 and 1956, world trade increased by about 11 per cent a year. During this period Britain's trade increased by about 6 per cent a year. So in fact our share of world trade has actually decreased. By contrast the annual rate of increase for West Germany in the same period was 19 per cent.

Before the war Britain built twice as many ships as anyone else. In 1957 Japan passed our output and now builds almost twice as many ships as Great Britain, while in 1958 we were overtaken by West Germany as well.

Investment figures tell a similar sad story. The amount of reinvestment by a country may also be taken as a rough guide to the scientific effort of that country, since scientists and engineers are needed in the designing, building and running of the plant and factory. Government policy of fluctuating credit squeeze and investment allowances has caused British investment to rise and fall in an alarming manner, but at its highest level it was poor compared with most countries in Europe. Between 1950 and 1954 the amount of reinvestment by Britain represented 14 per cent of the gross national product. This compares with 21 per cent or more for West Germany and Scandinavia. In fact during this period in Europe only Turkey had a lower investment rate. The two years which followed showed investment rising to a satisfactory level, but the Tories skilfully cut this off with the credit squeeze. Now, in the latest Budget, investment is to be encouraged again, but the prospects do not look very promising at the moment.

However, there is still one field where Britain leads Europe, and practically the world—this is in the proportion of the national income that we spend on defence. In 1958-59, according to the Chancellor's Financial Statement, out of a total Budget expenditure of £5,988 million, defence accounted for £1,468 million or almost a quarter. This gigantic proportion was even larger in previous years. It is therefore hardly surprising that the amount of money available for promoting the development of agriculture, the health services, medical research, education and the universities has been inadequate. The total expenditure of the D.S.I.R. (Department of Scientific and Industrial Research) in 1957 was only £8 million.

The Financing of Scientific Research

Since the war the government has become the main employer of scientists and technologists engaged in research and development, either directly through its own research departments, or indirectly by research contracts to private industry. Each year about £300 million is spent on research and development in this country, the government providing about 75 per cent and private industry the rest. Over half of the government's expenditure was in the form of research contracts to private industry, and these are concentrated in the defence industries. In fact,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

not far from two-thirds of the £300 million was spent on armaments research.

There were 142,000 qualified scientists and engineers in Britain in 1956, and of these 44,000 were engaged in research and development work. Just over half of these were in private industry, 11,500 in government work, and 9,000 in the universities. When it comes to the type of work being done, we have a picture of virtually half of our research workers being employed on defence work. With manpower as with expenditure, our national effort is deformed by the heavy bias in favour of our defence industries, leaving little money or manpower for the rest of our needs.

The Problems Before Us

The essence of the general problem can be stated quite briefly. Britain has one principal raw material, coal; our only other asset is the skill of the working people, backed by the ability of our scientists and technologists. A rising standard of living depends on increasing both the total volume of production and the efficiency of industry if we are to remain competitive. The employment of scientists and technologists to do this falls broadly into three categories. The first is research and development to produce the new processes and methods in industry and agriculture. The next is the job of designing and building the new plants and factories. Finally, scientists and engineers are needed for running the new means of production and for increasing the number available for getting the best out of our existing factories. The magnitude of the effort needed is far greater than the British capitalist seems capable of even envisaging, let alone putting into operation, and we can ill afford the luxury of our present defence programme. Failure to satisfy our needs to develop science and technology means a steady decline. We are on the brink of a fresh industrial revolution where no country can stand still.

The general case is made easily enough, but it is important to break it down and look at some of the individual problems facing various sections of industry.

The Aircraft Industry

The aircraft industry is a good example of defects inherent in the capitalist approach. For the first ten years after the war the industry boomed on the basis of the defence programme. The vast sums spent by the government on military aircraft and the finance of private research enabled the civil aircraft industry to reap much of the benefit. For example, the government spent £90 million on research and development of aircraft in 1955. When the military decided to pin their hopes on guided missiles and both research and orders were cut, the industry ran into immediate trouble. The aircraft workers were, of course, the chief sufferers, unemployment was widespread, many workers had to leave the industry altogether, and more redundancy is still appearing. A number of firms were forced to amalgamate. The latest development is that if Britain is to have a supersonic airliner in the sixties, more than £100 million will be needed for research and development. Private industry has no hope of finding the money, which will have to come largely from the government. There can be few stronger cases for nationalisation.

Similar situations exist in other industries with government research contracts. In the event of a disarmament agreement being concluded, or a change in the pattern of defence research, such as the one already taking shape, there is no guarantee that the scientists and technologists who are released will find fresh employment. However, many of Britain's industries present a very different problem. They are the ones where there is little appreciation or use of science; the shipbuilding industry, for example, spends very little on research despite its difficulties, relying chiefly on research associations and the National Physical Laboratory. The same outdated approach is the order of the day in many branches of the engineering industry. Often firms are too small to maintain a research laboratory, and, to many of those possessing one, it is a showpiece paid for out of taxes rather than a serious project. There are some forty-six research associations, mainly serving the traditional industries, which draw their income partly from industry and partly from the government through the D.S.I.R. For the most part the research associations represent a token gesture to science by the industry. They are almost invariably short of funds to carry out their work; a number have incomes of less than £20,000, and few have more than £250,000. The amount spent on research by British industry compares unfavourably in almost all cases with the equivalent expenditure in other advanced capitalist countries.

Another effect springing inevitably from the nature of capitalism is that in the larger firms where some attempt at research effort is made, the scientist employed in one firm often finds himself duplicating the work done by a fellow scientist in another firm. There are inevitably one or two exceptions to the general rule of inadequate scientific effort. One example is the chemical industry, or more accurately the petrochemical industry, producing plastics and chemicals based on products of the oil industry. This section is the most rapidly expanding section of industry, but as yet chemical exports represent only a small percentage of the total. Chemical exports in 1958 were £263 million or 8 per cent of the total, but it would be wrong to regard even this as all net gain, since we also imported £120 million of chemicals in the same year.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This gives some impression of the long-term damage being done to our economy by the policies of the capitalist class. It would be wrong, however, to give the impression that science and technology only affect our long-term prospects; in very many cases their application can result in immediate improvements. This being the case there are two good reasons why one would expect a greater intensity of scientific effort directed to this end. The first is that the much publicised increase in the nation's gold and dollar reserves has resulted primarily from a change in the terms of trade, with import prices falling and export prices remaining steady. This trend is already in process of being reversed. The second reason is the coming into being of the Common Market with its adverse effects on British trade with the Continent. Yet by what seems to be standard capitalist logic all the signs point to a slackening of our present scientific effort. Two years ago scientists and technologists could almost pick their jobs, now the majority find it difficult to change their jobs at all as a result of a terrific contraction of the market. A recent report showed that the university appointments boards had difficulty in placing their graduates in jobs in industry.

Something has been said to try to underline the weakness of Britain's current scientific effort and the link with our future living standards. It must be added that if Britain follows the post-war pattern of American capitalism, we are faced with a serious danger. The recovery from each of the post-war recessions in America has been characterised by an increased application of automation and an increased level of permanent unemployment. Thus British science may find itself used as the spearhead for a fresh attack on the jobs and wages of the working class. This attack can be defeated by the Labour movement, but the problem itself can only be solved by socialism.

Proposals for Policy

It is clear that there is both a great need and a great opportunity for the Labour movement to provide a constructive alternative to the present misuse of science under capitalism. The Communist Party above all others has an appreciation of the role of science in society, but we have, perhaps, tended to deal in generalities too much. We need to develop both a long-term perspective for the use of science and an immediate programme. Particular responsibility must rest on the scientists both in developing such a policy and in providing information for their comrades to consider the problem, and certainly not least in winning over their fellow scientists for support of such a policy. A few of the points that might go into such a policy are offered for discussion here.

The Supply of Scientists and Technologists

The Advisory Council on Scientific Policy has proposed that by 1966 there should be 50 per cent more qualified scientists and 70 per cent more qualified engineers than there were in 1956, and that by 1970 the annual output should be doubled. These are conservative figures, and given a progressive economy are likely to be inadequate. The present government programme of eventually producing 130,000 graduates a year means that when the famous bulge reaches the universities an even smaller proportion of secondary school children will be able to go to a university than at present. We should campaign for an increase to 170,000 graduates a year.

The huge reserve of scientists and technologists employed on defence work can be drawn on to bridge the gap that will exist until the greater supply of scientific workers becomes available. To this end the government must be forced to accept responsibility for this reorganisation and in particular to satisfy these points:—

1. The individuals concerned shall not suffer financially from the change-over.
2. Before existing teams are allowed to break up, there should be a study to see how many can be kept together to work on alternative problems.
3. Present government defence establishments should be kept in being for useful research. For example, in Harwell we have one of the finest schools of reactor physics in the world and the whole establishment could be turned over to entirely peaceful applications with little difficulty.

The Job of Being a Scientist

The best planned schemes for training scientists and engineers are of no avail unless young people are willing to make science their career, and once trained are willing to stay in the field. There is still too much of the picture of a scientist as a man in a white coat, juggling with complicated apparatus, who is completely abstracted from normal human preoccupations.

The scientist who is not just as concerned about his wages and conditions of work as any other worker is a rare bird indeed.

It is significant that all the figures in this article refer to qualified scientists. This is because little data is available on the greater number of skilled technicians who work with them. Yet these workers, almost invariably underpaid for the skill and responsibility that they have, are as vital to our scientific effort as the qualified men. Often, in fact, they may be doing the same job as he is, and we need to pay great attention to their training and conditions of work. It only needs to be added that in the field of science and technology, as in most others,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

we have hardly begun to draw in women workers, with the vast potential they represent.

The Fuel and Power Industries

The need for a national co-ordinated policy for the fuel and power industries is self-evident these days. The effect of the present lack of such a policy can be seen in the mines only too easily.

Coal, coal gas, nuclear power and fuel oil are so interdependent that a policy is urgently needed for developing the use of each of them in the national interest. At the moment, coal gas and electricity are made to compete with one another by government policy, with the result that they spend four times as much on advertising as on research. Recently also the National Coal Board decided to make a 5 per cent cut in the number of scientists it employed, and classified them as non-productive workers. We must press for an intensification of the work of developing and building new plants for producing gas from the types of coal which cannot be used at present.

This need for more work extends in fact to almost all the fields connected with the use of coal and coal gas. In the development of nuclear power stations the Atomic Energy Authority seems to have put almost all its eggs into the Calder Hall type of reactor, and we are lagging behind in the development of the later types which will succeed it, such as the boiling water reactor. The programme has in fact been jeopardised by the military requirements of plutonium production.

Fundamental Research

In the last analysis, industrial progress depends on the fundamental or pure research carried out principally at the universities. There is not only need to provide greater support for university research, but also to develop the scanty work done at the technical colleges. It is not merely the value of the research itself but it would make the recruiting of teachers easier and raise the status of the technical colleges. The work done by the D.S.I.R. and a number of the research associations could be extended. The greatest brake on their progress is the shortage of money.

In the field of medicine we have a moral obligation to make sure that the research workers are not hampered by shortage of funds. The fact that they are short of money was one of the themes of the recent Public Health conference.

The shortest way of saying all this is that we need a planned use of scientific resources. We are asking capitalism to do a job which it is incapable of doing. Even if capitalism succeeds in increasing the supply of scientists to something approaching the required level, there is no guarantee that it can use them, or that those who are used will be employed where they are really needed. At this moment Britain has a tremendous opportunity for increasing her production to meet a new market in supplying the underdeveloped countries. Nor is this only a temporary gain. The highest level of trade is between technically advanced countries, and this fact can help to divide the capitalist class, and win unexpected allies in the fight against colonialisation. There is a clear clash of interest between the capitalist based directly on colonial exploitation and the manufacture of capital equipment, for example. The struggle to end British imperialism is in a real way a struggle to make a permanent advance in our own standards of living.

It should be realised that the targets aimed at here are modest ones based on making Britain's scientific effort comparable with that of the most advanced capitalist countries. If we really want to keep abreast of the world, we have to set our sights at the pace being set by the Soviet Union. One figure alone indicates what this pace is: in the period covered by the Seven-Year Plan the Soviet Union will train 2,300,000 graduates.

It has been pointed out that the chemical industry is the fastest growing one in Britain; in the Soviet Union investment in the chemical industry in the next seven years will be five times that of the last seven years. To consider what this rate of development could mean for the British people is almost to step into the realm of science fiction. Think of the sort of world you want. Science and your own effort can give it to you. At the height of British imperialism it was the boast of the capitalist class that Britain was the workshop of the world. Only socialism can give this phrase any meaning now.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Communist Party and the "Daily Worker"

W. Lauchlan

A MAJOR decision of the Twenty-Sixth Congress of the Communist Party held at Easter was to increase Party membership to the level of 34,000. The decision to set this aim arose from the successes achieved in building up the membership of the Party since the low point reached after the Twenty-Fifth Congress in 1957. From 27,000 at the Twenty-Fifth Congress the membership fell to 24,900 at the beginning of 1958. A drive to increase the membership was launched by the Executive Committee in September of last year, with the aim of winning 5,000 recruits before the Twenty-Sixth Congress. In the event, 3,600 men and women applied to join the Party in the six months from September 1958 to March 1959, and the membership was raised to 26,500 by the date of the National Congress at Easter.

The success in winning new members, many of them being brought into the Party as a result of a large number of public meetings, better attended and more enthusiastic than for some time, generated a new spirit of confidence and pride in the Party as more and more members and supporters became convinced that the basis really existed for a considerable expansion of Communist Party membership, organisation and influence.

Indeed the building up of the Communist Party is the major issue for the successful development of the working class movement in the period ahead. The validity of this is heavily underlined by the bankruptcy of the right-wing Labour policies. The recent local government elections, assuming increased national significance since they are almost certainly the last local elections this side of the impending General Election, resulted in a serious setback for the Labour Party.

The results represent a decisive defeat for the whole outlook and policy of "moderation" which it is claimed is essential to attract the "floating voters". If the Tories are to be defeated at the General Election this whole outlook and policy will have to be rejected. A determined struggle is urgently needed to alter the policy of the Labour Party and to win it for action to rally the working people for a peace policy, free from entanglement with N.A.T.O., for jobs and higher wages, bigger pensions and more houses, and opposition to rent increases. This is the only way to rally the forces of the working class and people to rout the Tories at the coming General Election.

Why are the Communists so insistent that building up our Party and increasing the circulation of the *Daily Worker* is the key to the development of this struggle? Look at the situation in the Labour Party. The Bevanite forces have disintegrated and scattered following the decisions of the Brighton Conference in 1957, and Scarborough last year. The right-wing policies set out in the document *Industry and Society* mean the abandonment of nationalisation, and the superannuation scheme, intimately tied up with share-buying proposals, without an iota of Socialist principle, were supported by the Lefts on the Labour Party Executive. On the issue of the H-bomb the Left was divided and confused at Brighton, and finally broke up completely at Scarborough after appeals by the right-wing leaders for unity in preparation for the coming General Election.

"Victory for Socialism" was announced as the attempt to regroup and reorganise the forces of the Left. After an initial stir it is now as silent as the grave. How is it possible for such a situation to arise?

It arises because the Left in the Labour Party is not united in principle. They have differing conceptions of the nature of capitalism and socialism and the character of the struggle that needs to be waged in order to achieve victory for the working class.

Unless there is a united, cohesive force, with a clear alternative policy to that of the right wing, the Left and progressive forces will not be rallied as a united body, but will repeatedly be divided against themselves. However, there is such a rallying force for the whole of the Left: the Communist Party. Based on Marxism, it is united in principle, has a common outlook, is capable of speaking with one voice and giving the working class consistent militant leadership guided by Socialist principles.

The Left is potentially the majority in the Labour movement. But to enable it to become the real majority it must break the grip of the right wing, and for that there are two main requirements. First, it needs a policy, and second, leadership.

In the Labour movement the only Socialist programme which exists is *The British Road to Socialism*, produced by the Communist Party, and the only

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

organised political Party of the Left able to fight for such a programme in a consistent manner is the Communist Party. Without a Socialist programme and without principled leadership in the daily struggle the Left was bound to be defeated. This defeat was made doubly certain by the anti-communism of the Left in the post-war, and especially in the cold war, years. The outstanding lesson is that the Left and progressive forces cannot advance without the Communists.

The proof that the Communist Party is indispensable lies in the fact that there is no problem facing the working class on which it has not put forward a working class line of policy, and profound effects have already been felt as a result of the activities of the Communist Party. In the struggle for peace it was the Communists who set the example of mass campaigning against the H-bomb and the rocket sites, and in generating activity on all the issues threatening to break out into a new world war. The fight against unemployment and for the right to work has been raised to new heights by the mass lobbies of workers from Wales, Scotland and Lancashire, the West of England and the Midlands. Here, as in the fight for peace, it was the Communist Party which produced an anti-slump programme and called for the Labour movement to engage in action, to lobby Parliament and to bring the utmost pressure on the Government in order to combat the unemployment problem.

In the struggle against the Rent Act and in great battles against rent increases the Communist Party and the *Daily Worker* have been outstanding in rallying the tenants to defend themselves and their families. Above all the Communist Party has striven to end sectionalism in the Labour movement, cultivate class and Socialist understanding and consciousness, to represent the common class interests of the workers at every stage of the struggle and to show them what needs to be done to ensure a final solution to their problems.

Need for New Labour Policy

These are the reasons why the Communist Party must be built up and the circulation of the *Daily Worker* greatly increased with the utmost speed. Clarity in the Labour movement depends on the way the Communists engage in the fight to achieve it; and the extent of our success in that is, in turn, dependent on our size and strength.

It is necessary to emphasise this because the advance of the Labour movement depends on bringing about a change of policy. This change will be brought about by going to the mass of the workers day by day, helping to organise them for the struggle in defence of their interests, explaining, educating, answering the capitalist press, inspiring them with the perspective of socialism. This is what the Communist Party does. But it needs to do more on a very much bigger scale, and with a greater sense of urgency.

In the period leading up to the Twenty-Fifth National Congress our public work declined because of our preoccupation with internal political problems.

However, with the defeat of the revisionist ideas at our Twenty-Fifth Congress, and the strengthened unity of the Party, more and more of this vital public mass work has been conducted by our districts and a growing number of branches. In the six months leading up to the Twenty-Sixth Congress, the recruiting campaign was developed on the background of a considerable expansion of public meetings and activity presenting our policy to very large numbers of people.

This activity is absolutely indispensable for the growth and advance of the Communist Party. However much we may discuss and talk about our leading role, this must be demonstrated in fact, in action, regularly, and on an ever-extending scale. In this way we reach out, arouse interest, win support, generate actions, and convince more men and women from their own experiences of the need for an even bigger Communist Party.

That is why we are now calling for a rapid and widespread development of our propaganda and public work now and throughout the rest of this year, both in the open air, in the parks, streets, and at the factories and pits, as well as indoors with mass rallies in every main centre of the country.

The "Daily Worker"

The greatest single weapon we possess in our public work is the *Daily Worker*. Every day the paper informs, exposes and agitates in a brilliant manner. Its leadership in the struggle for peace, in the battle for jobs and wages, to secure justice for the old age pensioners and in rousing opposition to the Tory Rent Act, has been really splendid.

However, what is needed is something more than expressions of appreciation. Above all the *Daily Worker* must have a bigger circulation.

The Twenty-Sixth Congress of the Communist Party decided to launch a campaign to increase the daily readership by 5,000 and the week-end readership by 10,000 by the end of this year. These objectives must be attained not primarily to solve the circulation problem of the paper, but to rouse and organise the mass movement still further and, above all, to build the Communist Party.

It is no accident that the biggest and most effective factory branches of the Communist Party, those that do the best all-round work, are precisely the factories where there exists a powerful body of *Daily Worker* readers. Our best factory branch in West Middlesex has a regular daily sale of 110 copies, our best Lancashire branch a regular daily sale of 140 copies,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

our best Midlands branch sells 100 daily and our best Yorkshire factory branch sells regularly to one in eight of the workers; in North London in one factory one in six of the workers read the paper, while in Scotland our best branch sells 208 copies each day.

By this means these branches have built up around them an organised reserve of politically clear and staunch supporters, an organised force that gets things done in the factories. If in every factory where we have a Party branch the ratio of readers to workers was comparable to that of the best, there would be considerable advance in the circulation of the *Daily Worker*.

Even the best, however, still have considerable scope for improvement and we are asking all our comrades and branches without exception to intensify their every effort to win new readers for the paper. This is the way to aid our work, lighten our tasks and build our political influence on a solid and ever-extending basis.

In the wards of towns and cities, and in the villages, the best campaigning and development of association with active Labour people and local Labour Parties are to be found in the places where the branches give proper attention to campaigning with the *Daily Worker*.

Local branches of the Communist Party mainly sell the paper at weekends, either at pitches or on "rounds" to people who take the Saturday issue. The aim here is to increase the extra sales at the week-ends by another 10,000 copies. On the week-end of May 2nd 11,000 copies were sold over and above the usual Saturday extras and, on other occasions, thousands of additional copies have also been sold. One of the ways of reaching our objective is to bring every single branch of the Communist Party into this week-end activity. In the Midlands and Lancashire districts, for example, only about half the branches have regular week-end rounds. In Yorkshire about a quarter of the branches don't have week-end rounds. Although in other districts of the Party most branches are engaged in this important activity, the fact that in three major industrial districts such a large number of branches don't engage regularly in this public work with the *Daily Worker* indicates that there is considerable work to be done throughout the whole of the Party in winning every branch to play a full part in the campaign.

At the same time we are trying to win each of our local branches to take two extra copies of the *Daily Worker* each day and to try to secure two regular readers to take up these papers. In this way the first bridge is being built between the local branches who are, in the main, concerned with week-end sales, and the fight for increased daily circulation. Already more than 300 branches have agreed to take part in this campaign. Our next objective is to reach the 500 mark and then to push on until every branch is won for this activity.

Increasing the circulation of the *Daily Worker* and building up the size of the Communist Party are two sides of the same medal. Neither can succeed without the other. Both are necessary. Indeed, only the Communist Party with the *Daily Worker* consistently expressing support for Communist policy, and seeking to rouse the workers to united mass struggle, is in a position to wage a consistent and principled fight against the right-wing outlook, ideas and policy, and seriously advance the possibilities and prospects of change.

Although more can and will be done by the existing membership of the Communist Party the urgency of the situation and the scale on which we must work demands a rapid and considerable increase in our membership.

With its factory base, its branches, its press and literature the Communist Party is capable of initiating policy and developing effective, all-round united action. A bigger Party will be even more effective.

Those who say the Left and progressive forces in the Labour Party can advance without the Communist Party are failing completely to grasp these essentials. Labour policy is not decided by the constituency Labour Parties, but by the block vote of the great trade unions, and the answer doesn't lie in railing against the block vote, but in the political fight in the unions to change the position in the movement and in the Labour Party. Socialist propaganda in the factories combined with united action for the immediate demands of the workers is the key to success in this battle. Only the Communist Party engages in this kind of activity so vitally necessary for the defeat of right-wing policies. That is why there needs to be a political party, a daily newspaper, and an organised, active membership such as the Communist Party possesses to ensure the victory of the Left and progressive forces in the Labour movement. The trouble is that the Communist Party is not yet big enough to do with full effectiveness the job that needs to be done. That is why the aim of building the Communist Party up to 34,000 members is no narrow concern of the Communists but it is of vital concern to the whole of the Labour movement.

The fight of the Left and progressive forces is always stronger and most effective when there is a measure of unity between them and the Communist Party.

The achievement of the aim set for the next stage of growth is essential for the creation of a mass base for the Communist Party. A membership of 34,000 won't make the Communist Party a mass Party. However, it will mark a significant advance in the direction of building such a Party because it will establish a basis in many more factories,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

industries and localities for further and even more rapid advances. There can be no doubt, based on the experiences of the campaign up to the Twenty-Sixth Congress, that success in this effort will break down most of what remains of the feeling of lack of confidence about its possibility, fostered by the terrific and constant barrage of cold war and anti-Communist propaganda, and will convince very many more Communists that they should be more active in the struggle to build and strengthen the Party.

The size of the Communist Party and the struggle for the success of its policies is therefore a matter of crucial importance in the fight to defeat the right-wing policies, for the victory of Socialist principles and for the creation of the conditions for socialism here in Britain.

Whatever capitalist propaganda may say, we Communists have never subscribed to the idea that the achievement of socialism is the special preserve of a party, or of a section of the working people. Indeed, it is contrary to our whole fundamental conception of politics. The Communist Party is clearest in its views and most determined in its efforts to influence events, but it moves together *with*, although it *leads* the working class and the mass of the people.

What does this mean in practice and what is its relation to the building of the Communist Party? It means that the Communists must constantly work and strive to lead the struggle in all kinds of organisations, factories and movements of the people, and that this is our way forward to becoming a mass political movement.

In our Congress we took our stand against Revisionism and Reformism. At the same time John Gollan, in his reply to the discussion on the Political Report, stated that, "We must maintain our Socialist principles as expressed in *The British Road to Socialism*, but *unless our Party fights on the day-to-day issues, we will never make progress.*" In the struggle to build the Party, each Communist and each branch must get closer and closer to our Labour friends and everyone in the Labour movement who wants progress, the defeat of Tory attacks, new Socialist policies in the movement.

Many of our branches and districts have established good relations with Labour people. There is, however, a tremendous amount yet to be done before we can say that we are measuring up to the test of challenging and combating sectarianism in the great battle for the immediate and future interests of the Labour movement. Does this mean that there is a conflict in practice between fighting sectarian attitudes and striving to work in unity with other sections of the Labour movement and building the Communist Party? On the contrary, the stronger the Communist Party the greater the prospects for the development of united action and the advance of all Left and progressive forces in the movement.

More Members, More Branches

Size gives a necessary quality to the Party: gives it more authority in the eyes of the people, and more talent to use in its tasks. Lenin put the issue this way:

> "More new people from the masses into the Party for independent participation in the creation of a new life—such is our motto in the struggle against all difficulties; such is our road to victory." (*Collected Works,* Vol. 20. Workers' State and Party Week).

During this year and next when the Communist Party will be fighting for the raising of its membership to the level of 34,000 it will be necessary to ensure that there is a systematic establishment and building up of new branches in factories, pits and other places of work and in towns and villages where at present we have no organisation or only a few members. If we were already a mass Party with a membership of 100,000 or more, we would certainly have a vast network of branches in a large number of towns, cities and villages where there is no organisation today. The need to break new ground now, and to organise many more branches is vital for the success of our Party building campaign and the development of Communist activity and influence among new sections of the working people and their allies. Communist ideas are powerful. It is organisation that makes them all-powerful.

Organisation is vital and it is essential therefore that it should be extended in the form of new branches, hand in hand with the enlargement of membership.

In every part of the country there are towns with populations of many thousands where we need to build up branches *now*. One such town in Lancashire, for example, is Widnes with a population of 50,000 and yet without a Communist Party branch.

Batley, in Yorkshire, has a population of 40,000 but, like too many towns in Yorkshire, has no Communist organisation. In Scotland, among the bigger towns where there is no organised Party branch is Ayr, with more than 40,000 population. In Grantham in Lincolnshire it's the same story.

These are examples selected at random but they can be multiplied all over Britain and the number of large towns without Communist branches constitute a formidable list.

We cannot tackle everything at this stage, but it is urgently necessary in each part of the country to tackle a number of towns where we do not have at present organised branches in existence.

It was Lenin who said that the organisational role of the working class was its principal role. But the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

working class needs leadership. And the leadership must itself be effectively organised to influence and guide the working class if it is to be able to use the power that is latent within its ranks. The strength of the Communist Party depends above all on the strength of its branches. It is through the branches that we get the closest unity between the Party and the people. That is why we place so much importance on the branches becoming lively, active and influential organisations and must increase their numbers as we build up the Party's membership in the years ahead.

Power of the Labour Movement

The tremendous potential organising power of the working class in Britain becomes clear when we consider it in relation to the rest of the population. Out of a total of 50 million men, women and children in these islands, there is a working population of 22 million. In Britain there is no doubt about the workers and their families constituting a decisive majority of the total population and of the working population.

Closer examination reveals that within the working population a majority—nearly 13 million—or nearly seven out of every eleven, are employed in a limited range of key productive and service industries. Clearly the influence of this grouping is potentially powerful. But because of right wing domination of the movement, this power is not fully mobilised and unitedly used in the interests of the working class in the struggle to defend living standards and secure peace, let alone transform society. As a result the workers don't advance as they should and don't win allies as they must.

If, on the other hand, the main decisive sections of the working class could be influenced to accept and follow the leadership of the Communist Party this would profoundly affect the political outlook of the entire working class, and wide sections outside of the working class. All of which serves to emphasise the need for a great extension of organisation especially in the factories and other places of work. It is in the factories, whether employing hundreds or tens of thousands, that class understanding is strongest and the workers are most conscious of their common interests. On the job the power and influence of the workers can be most rapidly and most effectively organised and brought into action.

And the main sections of the workers would support the policies of the Communist Party if we had branches in several thousands of factories, pits, depots and other places of work, presenting our policy and fighting to change their political ideas.

Instead, we have several hundred factory branches with 15 per cent of our membership organised on a factory basis. There are, of course, some hundreds more places where we have numbers of members but no organised branches.

However, we have found out from experience how to work in the factories and it is now up to us to do all in our power to make big changes in this sphere. One thing is clear. We cannot decisively improve our position without a considerable advance in the factories and throughout the major industries.

Intellectuals

For the Communist Party to be able to achieve such a position of influence where it is bound up with the class and the masses "into one indissoluble whole", there must be a rapid and widespread building up of its membership and organisation, above all, in the factories. That is why special attention will be given to the development of the Party in the factories during these next two years.

This does not mean, however, that we are or should be neglectful of the intellectuals, students, the professional and middle class sections of the people. We are proud that we are a working class Party, but we are proud, too, of the professors, teachers, doctors, scientists, writers, lawyers and others in our ranks. We need more and more of them in the Communist Party. They are invaluable not only for the part they can play in the political movement today and in the battle of ideas; they are necessary also as allies of the working class in building socialism.

The students are the teachers, intellectuals, scientists and professional people of tomorrow. Big political developments are taking place among university students today especially in the fight for nuclear disarmament and a real peace policy. This can and must be extended and deepened and the students helped to understand that capitalism causes the frustrations and the insecurity they endure today and that socialism will open up vast possibilities for them to scale the pinnacles of social, scientific and cultural achievement.

Although determined efforts need to be made to influence and to win into our ranks men and women from these sections of the population, the emphasis on building up our membership amongst the industrial workers does not mean a conflict. A stronger Communist Party will increasingly exert its influence on the ideas and political conceptions of the most significant and politically important sections of the professional and middle class groups, thereby bringing additional and valuable forces into the fight for socialism.

The Basic for a Mass Party

The achievement of a membership of 34,000 will mark a significant advance in the direction of creating the basis for such a mass Party so essential for decisive political change in Britain. Can we succeed in this aim? Can we achieve it within the next two

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

years? To both these questions the answer is YES!

The entire political situation in Britain is favourable to bringing into the Communist Party hundreds and thousands of men and women willing and able to help our fight. Millions are sick and tired of the cold war and want something done to ease the tension. A great movement has developed for nuclear disarmament, and throughout the country there is a deep-seated feeling of horror at the prospect of West Germany being given nuclear weapons.

For the first time in a generation youngsters are leaving school and marching straight to the Labour Exchanges because there is no work for them. The advocates of anti-communism are operating on an ever-narrowing basis as economic difficulties, aggravated by the gigantic expenditure on armaments, increase and intensify. The mighty advances of the Socialist countries are now more widely known and accepted and are a growing challenge to the capitalist world.

In such a situation bold public activity by the Communists will win a growing support. The more the workers hear our arguments and proposals and the more their experiences show the correctness of our policies, the greater will be our influence.

But the actual building of the Communist Party is a serious political battle. The Communist Party won't grow of its own accord. It has to fight to grow. It must wage a powerful political battle to expand. That is why, as we develop and extend our public work, we need to take the offensive and strive consciously, deliberately and systematically to win new members, and to win them on such a scale as will ensure a registered membership of 30,000 by the end of this year.

That would place the Party in a favourable position for further advance to reach the 34,000 by the time of the celebrations for our Fortieth Anniversary in August 1960. This is a formidable task, but it can be done.

The need at this stage is for the greatest initiative and audacity in the public fight for the policy of the Party. To the extent that we succeed in this and fight for our policy in a bolder, non-sectarian and really popular way, the prospects for the growth of the Party will also improve.

If this public fight is accompanied by systematic planning and determined effort to win new fighters into our ranks, the Party will grow and the British working class will get more and more the kind of leadership it needs and deserves.

Discussion contributions:

On the Jewish Problem

W. Gallacher

JACK ROSENBERG is quite correct when he puts the question, in connection with the State of Israel, "Should we not be examining the particular historic forms and inter-connections that gave it birth?" This is the vital question and to answer it in the affirmative will involve a study of Jewish history from the earliest days. For all that happened before the second dispersion had its bearing on what happened to the Jewish people in feudal Europe, and what happened in that period sowed the seeds that brought forth the evil growth of anti-Semitism and determined the conditions that gave rise to Zionism—the political parent of the Jewish State.

I have read, with a certain amount of diligence, the Old Testament, and *Antiquities of the Jews* and *Jewish Wars* by Josephus. Their wars, if we are to accept these, were many and varied. They were, in the main, a pastoral people, with a patriarchal form of society which involved them in many semi-tribal struggles, even while they were constantly menaced by the more powerful Egyptians on one side and the "proud Assyrians" on the other.

True they had forty years of glory under the leadership of King David, and his son Solomon, the latter taking on the task so dear to the heart of his father, the building of the Temple. Great days for the Jewish people, and always they have lived in hope of their return.

Long before this "time of glory" they suffered deeply from the harsh domination of the Pharaohs. The Egyptians had many gods but none of them were of any help to the suffering Jews. But they discovered in the heavens, which were just a short distance overhead, a God of their own, the great and all-powerful Jehovah. He was a God of war, and would in due course subdue their enemies and make of them a great nation. This knowledge held the tribes together and gave them promise of happy days so long as they were obedient to his laws and gave glory to his name.

Thus, at their weakest, with ruthless, plundering forces on either side of them, when they were, it may be said, between the hammer and the anvil,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the thought of the mighty God who was watching over them enabled them to bear whatever suffering or indignity might be imposed upon them.

While there were occasional heroic uprisings against their oppressors, the Maccabees and the great revolt against Vespasian and Titus, they were often badly served by their own God-appointed leaders.

But within two or three centuries the Roman Empire itself showed all the signs of decay. Constantine, who embraced the Christian faith, moved the centre of his Empire from Rome to Byzantium, where he built a new First City of the Empire, which took his name, Constantinople.

Conditions in Europe

In Europe the Empire was in an advanced state of dissolution. Powerful barons with mercenary armies were busily engaged grabbing territory and setting up their own authority. A new order of society, feudalism, had its birth with the decline and fall of the Roman Empire.

But in the towns and cities the merchants and artisans had their own organisations, merchants' and artisans' guilds, which sought to protect their members from the rapacity of the feudal barons.

This was the Europe into which the Jewish wanderers came and pitched their tents. There was no possibility of work as artisans, as only guild members could engage in any of the crafts and only sons or nephews of members were accepted as apprentices. So the Jewish people, shut out from the guilds and as a consequence from the social life that centred around these, had to huddle together wherever they could find room, live their own life, and earn a living as best they might. All that was left to them was to confine themselves to domestic industry and leave it to more ingenious members of the community to find ways and means of disposing of the product of their labour. Many of these latter were able to accumulate a considerable amount of money. With this they were at an advantage. Usury was prohibited by the Church but it didn't affect the Jews. They were ready to make loans where there was hope of a substantial return. They became known as experts in financial transactions of one kind and another. This was the undoing of the Jewish people in Europe.

I always remember a phrase in Sismondi's *The Rise of the Italian Republics*, a very striking phrase, "The rising merchant class of Italy", he says, "knew how to turn national disaster into public good". What did he mean? If the feudal lord went to war and got defeated, that was national disaster. But he returned bankrupt and had to borrow from the merchants; they would only agree to a loan provided he signed an extended political franchise—that was public good.

Cutting right across this convenient (for the merchants) state of affairs, came the Jews. No longer were the impoverished barons dependent on the merchants; they could get, or force, more favourable loans from the Jews without any trouble about new franchises. This brought the Jews into direct conflict with the new rising class. Yet they could not refuse loans to the powerful barons without facing the danger of torture and extortion. So they were once again between the hammer and the anvil, between the Barons and the merchants, blocking the forward advance of the latter.

Financial Basis

Not only was there this to arouse the enmity of the merchants, there was the fact that some of the barons saw the advantage of using financial Jews to act as their tax-collectors—a most unpopular occupation. *Jew Suss* portrays such a character who, ably serving his master, was treated by the latter with tolerant contempt, while attracting the hatred of those who had to supply the cash towards himself and the Jewish people. For while such a serviceable Jew could expect the protection of the Duke, there was no protection for the Jewish people. They were exceptionally vulnerable and could be, and were, attacked with impunity.

This "buffer" position of the Jews is brought out quite clearly in "Shylock". I don't know what exactly Shakespeare had in mind when he wrote it, if he did write it, but despite the seemingly anti-Jew impression that the title and some of the expressions might create, I get the feeling that he was conscious of the hypocrisy of the bourgeois and of the inherent dignity of the Jews.

For the famous speech, "The quality of mercy is not strained", is full of cant, the stuff you can always rely on getting from the bourgeois when there's some particularly dirty work being prepared. Certainly none of those in the court had any intention of showing mercy to Shylock. Whether or no it fell "like gentle dew from heaven" it wasn't going to fall on him. The cant is carried into the verdict. The Duke tells him that they are going to be more merciful than he was, his life will be spared but half his goods will go to the merchant, the other half to the state. In a couple of short sentences Shylock, in one of the finest passages in the play, spurns this robber's sentence:

> "Nay, nay, take my life and all, pardon not that.
> You take my house when you do take the prop
> That doth sustain my house,
> You take my life when you do take
> The means whereby I live".

But whatever may be thought of the play, the lesson is clear, the Jew was caught between the Duke and the merchant. And all through it can be seen the hatred of merchants, even while they are

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

proposing to make use of him. It has been noted, and often remarked upon, that anti-Semitism has never been active in England. The reason for that is clear. The London merchants, alive to what was happening, were strong enough to force the King to expel the Jews from England, so there never was any question of the Jews, in the formative period of the rise of the merchants, on the road to the new order of capitalism, coming in between the merchants and their political advance. It wasn't until capitalism was well under way and the banking experience of the financial Jews became a valuable asset to the new order that the gates of England were once again opened to the Jewish people.

The Ghetto Jew

But while the financial Jews were able to take their place with the high and mighty, the Ghetto Jews were still forced, by the limitations placed on them by history, to continue huddling together, confining themselves to domestic industry and petty trading.

Through centuries of suffering, these latter, much more so than the others, had it borne in on them that where there were progressive people, or progressive movements, there was friendship and a complete absence of anti-Semitism. Where reaction held, or sought to secure, power, the danger was very great.

Thus the Ghetto, or working class Jews, drew more and more towards progressive movements and wherever opportunity offered, openly participated in them, in the course of time providing such movements with a considerable element of their leadership.

So we may sum up this part with two lessons that should be ever in the minds of the Jewish people:

(1) Never become a buffer between two opposing forces, for there lie the roots of anti-Semitism; and

(2) Recognise that the future of the Jewish people, a future of peace and security, free from any threat of anti-Semitism, lies in full association with the progressive forces, with those who seek to change the world, and never with the reactionaries who are desperately striving to hold on to what is still left of their rapidly decaying system.

So far I have been dealing with two trends in Jewish history, domestic industry and banking. Workers and financiers. But there is another and very important trend in the long story of the Jewish people.

"Golden Age"

Great was the glory of the Jews in the days of David and his son Solomon, but even greater, from the point of view of service to humanity, were the centuries when, with the Moors of Spain, they brought light and learning into Europe and ultimately ended the Dark Ages of that continent, which had lasted for a thousand years. It will not dwell at length on this "Golden Age" of Jewry; it is, or should be, sufficiently well known. Enough to say that not only did the Jews participate in the general administration of the country, not only did they develop agriculture and industry, but they specialised in education, medicine, and science. Teachers, doctors, scientists, and philosophers in the schools, the surgeries, and the universities, were for the most part Jews. Great and glorious was Moorish Spain while Europe lay mentally dead under the wretched opiate of sordid superstition.

So, the very nobles who were persecuting Jews throughout Europe were sending their sons and daughters to Cordova to be educated by Jewish teachers and philosophers. From this four centuries of incalculable service, there comes the third trend in Jewish life, medicine, science and philosophy. And, in comparison to their numbers, they occupy in all these spheres an outstanding foremost place. And what lesson is there in this? It should be clear, service to humanity brings with it integration with the main army. Jewish teachers, doctors, scientists and philosophers take an active and very often a leading part in the associations connected with these various branches of learning.

No one could ever dream of a teachers' or a doctors' voluntary Ghetto. They belong to their respective associations just in exactly the same way as their Gentile colleagues. Thus the key to integration is service to humanity; when Jew and Gentile are engaged in this great task there can be no such evil growth as anti-Semitism.

But anti-Semitism was rampant in Europe last century and the people of the Ghettos had to face not only daily insults but periodic pogroms of the most brutal and bestial character. It's a fearsome story of human suffering.

It was this that started Herzl on his campaign for emigrating Jews to Palestine. The wealthy Jews were to supply the resources, but the emigrants would be the tortured Jews of the Ghettos. The movement he started interested Jewry, but had little or no impact outside of Jewish circles, until the First World War brought about a situation which made Britain desperate to get American support, and for this purpose the Jews of America were a very important counter. So the Balfour Declaration was sent to the Zionist leader, Weizmann.

The Balfour Declaration

This declaration promised a national home for the Jews in Palestine at the end of the war. But, of course, nothing was said about the fact that Lawrence of Arabia had been instructed to make a similar promise of Palestine to the Arabs.

With the victory of the Allies there began a steady flow of Jews towards Palestine, while the Zionists kept pressing for the implementation of the Balfour Declaration. In the course of this campaign a

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

favourite argument of the Zionists was that "a Jewish Palestine would be a valuable outpost in the Middle East for Western civilisation"—"Western civilisation" should read Western imperialism, which means that the Zionists were actually, and deliberately, proposing to place the Jewish people in Palestine as a buffer between the imperialist oppressors of the Arabian people and the liberation forces in the Middle East. As a consequence of initial betrayal of true Jewish interests, the leading Jews in Palestine have looked on themselves as a part of the West, and not as a Middle East country with its future tied up with the liberation and progress of its Arab neighbours.

This attitude made them the enemies of progress when the liberation movement got going in Palestine in the twenties. The Arabs wanted the British out, the Jews wanted them to remain. There they were, despite the lessons of history, between the British imperialists and the Arab nationalists, and getting the worst of both worlds.

The Communists urged the Zionists to join with the Arabs for an independent Palestine, for a binational state, but they wouldn't listen to us.

They didn't want an independent Palestine while they were in a minority; they had suffered too much as minorities in other countries, and they weren't going to take any chance in Palestine. With the backing of the West and, particularly in Britain, with the backing of the Labour Party, the immigration would advance until their ambition was achieved and Palestine would become free with a majority Jewish Government. It sounded fine in Jewish ears, but there were many snags they never cared to discuss. They were to come up against them later on.

The Jewish minority was in a much better position to win the support of the Arab fellahin, than the effendi minority. But when they opposed independence, when they took their place with the imperialists, and adopted the superior pose of representatives of Western civilisation, with a consequential attitude of contempt for the "backward" Arabs, they drove the fellahin back into the arms of the effendi. These latter, although they were ruthlessly exploiting their more unfortunate brethren, were nevertheless carrying on a progressive struggle in the fight for independence, a fight that should have been led by the more politically conscious Jews.

Instead of that, their attitude to the Arabs was in many respects similar to that of the anti-Semites towards their own people. For them the Arabs were of no account; their affiliations were towards the West, and they looked to Britain to make the path easy for them to reach their cherished goal—a Jewish Palestine.

The Labour Party was committed to Zionism, and its leaders missed no opportunity of attending Zionist gatherings where they gave the most solemn pledges on this all-important Jewish question. In such a situation the Zionists could afford to ignore the warnings of the Communists.

In 1945 the Second World War was over, and the Labour Party was returned in the general election with a resounding majority. The Zionists were delighted. Palestine was as good as theirs. Britain got the mandate for Palestine, and with Ernest Bevin as Foreign Secretary, it looked as though all would be well; but they got a rude awakening.

The Mandate

The Mandate laid it down that when the mandatory power was relinquishing the Mandate, special consideration would be given to the situation in Transjordan, a recognised part of Palestine, much larger than Palestine proper, sparsely occupied by Arab tribesmen under the rule of Sheikh Abdulla. In breach of the Mandate, Bevin handed over Transjordan to the Sheikh, transformed it into a Kingdom, and transformed the Sheikh into King Abdulla.

Quite a unique achievement for a Socialist minister representing a Socialist Government! It became only too obvious that the Zionists were betrayed, or fooled again, and so, instead of Britain and the Labour Party opening the way for mass immigration and a Jewish Palestine, they opened up the way for a new Jewish war—war against Britain.

Then came the discussions in the United Nations, leading eventually to the partition and the setting up of a small Jewish State. Had the Zionists learned any lessons from these various betrayals? Not them. When they took over, the imperialists appeared to be strong and firmly entrenched in the Middle East; the Arabs weak and seemingly helpless with their countries occupied or under imperialist control. So they staked their future on alignment with the imperialists. They failed to see the course history was taking when Egypt forced Britain to withdraw its troops, thereby ending the long domination under which that country had suffered. So little did they seem to understand what was going on, they conspired with the French and British imperialists for an attack on Egypt which aroused the most bitter hostility against them on the part of every Arab country. Now the historical process is becoming very much clearer, will they read the signs and act accordingly? Will the Jewish State live with its Arab neighbours, or will it decline and die with the decline and death of imperialism in the Middle East? That is the question that confronts Zionism and the leaders of the small Jewish State. "There is always something becoming and something passing away", and there can be no doubt about what is happening in the Middle East. It may be one year, two years, or ten years, but history has served notice: each year the Arab countries will grow stronger, each year the imperialists will lose ground until they are out completely and for

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

good. With such a situation developing there is no future for the small State of Israel other than in friendship and collaboration with its Arab neighbours. Our Party comrades in Israel have put this line clearly in the Knesset but Ben Gurion cannot see beyond dollars from America.

Yiddish

Regarding the question of Yiddish in the Soviet Union: I took a considerable interest in this, and on several occasions raised it with our Soviet comrades. Comrade Waterman and other Jewish comrades feel strongly on this issue, although they have to admit that it is not such a question as should affect our faith in the Soviet Union or in Socialism as the ultimate solution to all the evils of anti-Semitism. Comrade Waterman puts the question thus: "Should Marxists attempt by artificial means to eliminate a living language and culture, by 'administrative measures', instead of allowing the historical process of cultural integration to take its natural course?"

If this means anything, it means that Yiddish in the Soviet Union is passing away, but that it hasn't yet reached the stage of decline that can justify the decision that was taken to stop subsidising the Yiddish theatre and the Yiddish press. For that was the "administrative measure". The comrades with whom I discussed this assured me that in Moscow, as distinct from Kiev, the process of integration had advanced very far, and that support for Yiddish had declined accordingly. Surely Comrade Waterman will agree that integration has made a very great advance from 1917 till 1948?

Also he must take note of the fact that since 1948 Yiddish, outside the Socialist countries, could make no claim to represent the workers or poor Jews.

As for the statement by Comrade Ramelson, taken up by Comrade Waterman, that "Wherever the Ghetto walls were broken down—as in Western Europe and America—Yiddish ceased to develop"—are the Ghetto walls broken down in Europe or America? If the Ghetto walls are broken down, why isn't there integration? Isn't it clear that centuries of Ghetto life have left their legacy, the form and much of the psychology, and, for the older people, the language of the Ghetto?

But Comrade Waterman indignantly repudiates the idea that Yiddish was a "Ghetto language". He exclaims, "Ghetto language indeed! One may as well call Negro culture in the U.S.A. Ghetto culture".

Negro culture in the U.S.A. has taken a specific form arising out of conditions of slavery and the discriminations and persecutions that have followed on its ending. It has taken the form of Negro spirituals with an accompanying heartbeat of their ancient tribal life in Africa. It expresses the sufferings and aspirations of the millions of American Negroes and is therefore a living and progressive cultural expression, dear to all who believe in Socialism—in the Brotherhood of Man. So with Yiddish, as Comrade Waterman says, "It became a weapon of the working class and poor Jews, embraced and loved by them, sinking deep into their consciousness and daily life."

No one could claim that for Yiddish publications today. The language of working class and "poor Jews" is the language of the trade union and broad Labour movement, which includes the Communist Party.

Thus the only question at issue is, to use the words of Comrade Waterman: Has "the historical process of cultural integration" advanced sufficiently in the Soviet Union to make necessary the decision to discontinue subsidising a diminishing language culture, or has that stage not yet been reached? There may be a difference of opinion on that without making it a major issue. The big question is the menace of Zionism, as a tool of imperialism, to the Jewish State and to the Jews in every capitalist country.

Michael Cohen

IN introducing his article "An Old Problem Re-discussed", Bert Ramelson refers to anti-Semitism as the essence of the problem. I would like to draw attention to a new aspect of the question, which, if not the essence, is nevertheless of interest.

Marxists are, I think, agreed that socialism is the only real answer to anti-Semitism. Socialism, in smashing the ecomomic base of anti-Semitism, liberates Jewish citizens of the new society for the fullest participation and assimilation in the building of Communism.

The question that I am thinking of is: Does it follow from the general Marxist analysis made by Bert Ramelson and others, that in time this process of assimilation will really be *complete*? In five or six generations will no citizens of a Communist society be in a position to distinguish themselves as of Jewish descent?

These projections into the future may appear to be academic and of little importance. I feel, however, that a consideration of this question from a Marxist point of view might help us to see the question of Jewish culture more clearly.

Many Jewish Communists appear to think that Jewish culture can be equated with Yiddish culture. This is not so. Although the origins of the Yiddish language go back to the influx into Eastern Europe of Jews (particularly from Germany) in the Middle Ages, its poetry and song

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

developed as a disciplined culture of the people mainly from the nineteenth century onwards.

Thus Yiddish culture is relatively young, compared to the history of the Jews. What is more, because it developed so late, long after the world-wide dispersion of the Jews had reduced them from a Semitic nation into communities of a minority character, the Eastern European Jews among whom Yiddish developed represented only one section, though a large one, of Jewry.

Numerically and historically then, Yiddish appears as only a part of a whole.

In this context it is fair to quote a relevant passage from Bert Ramelson's article in full:

> "Yiddish developed over the centuries as the mother-tongue of Jews in Central and Eastern Europe, owing to the persecution of Jews and the enforced segregation of the Ghettoes. This compulsory isolation developed a common way of life, tradition and behaviour, and this in turn gave rise to a specific Yiddish culture, whose essence was the depicting of Ghetto life and a yearning for revolt against such intolerable conditions."
>
> *Marxism Today*, Jan. 1959, p. 25.

(*Cf. Alec Waterman's edition of this passage, "Marxism Today", April* 1959, *p.* 124.)

The satire, humour and poignancy of Yiddish literature, drama, poetry and song will surely survive through the centuries, though mainly in translation, I think (except for philologists and particularly keen students of history).

A *national* Jewish culture is to be found in the history of the Jews when they were a nation, or in the early period of the dispersion.

The poetry of David, Solomon and Isaiah for example; the precociously civilised legal code of ancient Jewry; the revolutionary monotheism of Moses; the philosophical experiments of Maimonides . . . these contributions to human progress will also survive, long after the Jewish and Christian religions have ceased to be practised of professed.

Up to the twentieth century the "highly organised religion" that Ramelson refers to has indeed ". . . played a part in the maintenance of Jewry as distinctive groups".

Ever since the Babylonian exile the Jewish religious leaders, recognising tacitly that an unbridgeable gulf lay between the religion and the secular existence of the Jews as citizens of many nations, have tenaciously wrapped up the religion with a thousand-and-one traditions and customs, *designed specifically* to hold together a people in the throes of dispersion, and subject to the ever-growing influences of foreign cultures and ideas. These laws, injunctions, practices and traditions have, I believe, been an important factor in moulding the well-known, but less well-understood "characteristics" of Jews. Particularly in Eastern Europe, which became a stronghold of the orthodox religion, the ritual and habits, religious in origin, became interwoven and absorbed in many ways into the life of Jews, many of whom slowly drifted further and further away from the practice and understanding of the religion itself.

Yiddish

It is not without significance that the Yiddish language which grew out of the superimposition of German on to Slavic tongues, contains still today, in its fully developed form, a large contribution from Hebrew, the "loshen koidesh" ("Holy language").

It just so happens, then, that a dwindling minority of "rabbis and clerics", that Alec Waterman refers to rather contemptuously, have kept alive, for their own religious motives, this great cultural heritage referred to above; much as a fast dwindling minority of Yiddish-speaking Jews are today still keeping alive Yiddish culture.

Inevitably, there is much that is negative and reactionary in Jewish and Yiddish culture. As the religion and anti-Semitism vanish with the forward sweep of communism, so will these cultural traditions die, in the sense that what no longer has roots cannot grow, but must die. Such a death does not, however, mean extinction; all that which is of artistic value to humanity will be preserved, just as the collapse of ancient Greece has not robbed modern generations of its beauty and its legends.

And what of Israel? The culture of the new State of Israel is as new as the state itself. Whilst naturally it still reflects the past indirectly, it is essentially the medium of a new nation in the twentieth century. It gives expression to the optimism and enthusiasm as well as the chauvinism of a young country.

In the future it must surely reflect in growing measure the mounting struggle of all the people of the Middle East for a better future. For just as surely as the State of Israel is a *fait accompli* so must its working people move towards unity and common struggle with the Arab peoples around them.

What conclusions do I then reach from the above considerations?

1. The advent of socialism and communism has brought with it the final solution of the "Jewish Problem". Given peace and with it the further advance of Communism there appears to be nothing standing in the way of the complete

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

assimilation of Jews among the peoples of the world. The culture of the Jews, and this includes Yiddish, is an historical fact and a part of the human heritage.

2. There is nothing intrinsically revolutionary about Yiddish; its revolutionary rebellious character is the influence of social conditions, and in modern times, the struggle of the working-class, superimposed upon it. Its origins are deeper and more complex, and have to be recognised.

3. To attempt to unnaturally hasten the demise of Yiddish is to offend against every principle that Marxists hold dear.

That is why I think it absurd for Bert Ramelson to conscientiously quote, and without further comment, an alleged "justification" of the crimes committed against Soviet society ("The justification given for these measures [i.e. administrative measures against Yiddish—M.C.] was that there was not enough demand to justify such undertakings." Ramelson, p. 26). Why make this point? Bert himself associates these measures with the period of abuse of Soviet Democracy and legality; surely he is not trying to imply that there might have been some justification after all for brutal anti-communist activities condemned by the Twentieth Congress of the C.P.S.U.

4. The examples quoted by Alec Waterman of continued interest in Yiddish in the Soviet Union today confirm that the abrupt and artificial closing down of institutions does not assist a purely natural process of assimilation; on the contrary, it could well delay it. I agree with Bert Ramelson that the Soviet people are best able to evaluate this, and other related and more detailed factual matters—not just because they are on the spot, but also because they have available to them the most experienced Communist Party in the world.

Recent developments in the Soviet Union justify such confidence anew.

Published by the Communist Party, 16 King Street, London, W.C.2, and printed by Farleigh Press Ltd. (T.U. all depts.) Beechwood Rise, Watford, Herts.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ECONOMIC SCHOOL

WORTLEY HALL, nr. Sheffield
September 12th to 19th

BRITISH CAPITALISM IN 1959

Economic Crises—Welfare State—
Nationalisation and Socialist Policy

CHINESE ECONOMIC GROWTH

Cost £7

Apply: Economic Sub-Committee,
16 King Street, London, W.C.2.

Conference on

OPERA and BALLET

Royal Hotel, Woburn Place,
London, W.C.1.

Sunday, July 5, 2.30—6 p.m.

Chairman: **Thomas Russell**
Opening Statement: **Alan Bush**

Apply: Music Group,
16 King Street, W.C.2.

Admission 2/6

THE BOOK OF THE MONTH . . .

The long-awaited new edition of

ANCIENT SOCIETY

by

Lewis H. Morgan

the monumental work which transformed men's ideas about the evolution of society. Of this study of ancient social development written more than 80 years ago, Engels said:

"Morgan is the first man who with his expert knowledge has attempted to introduce a definite order into human pre-history."

17/6 . . . . . at COLLET'S new bookshop

64-66 CHARING CROSS ROAD, LONDON, W.C.1

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LAWRENCE & WISHART

MARX
Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844

First draft of the philosophy of Marxism—for the first time in English.

translated by Martin Milligan

209 pp. 3s. 6d.

Two more studies by leading Russian scientists

COSMIC RAYS

G. Zhdanov 4s. 6d.

SOVIET MEDICINE in the fight against MENTAL DISEASES

L. Rokhlin 5s.

Distributed by Central Books Ltd., 37 Grays Inn Road, London, W.C.1.

THE ORIGIN OF THE FAMILY, PRIVATE PROPERTY AND THE STATE

by F. Engels

294 pp. (paper) 1s 6d

SOCIALISM: UTOPIAN AND SCIENTIFIC

by F. Engels

127 pp. (paper) 6d

You'll find these and many other Marxist classics at

the new CENTRAL BOOKS shop

37 Grays Inn Road, London, W.C.1

(near Holborn Hall)

London's centre for progressive books.

Books on politics, economics, philosophy, history; the labour movement; books for study, and books for relaxation.

Come in and browse round, or write for lists and order from our quick-service mail order department.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED